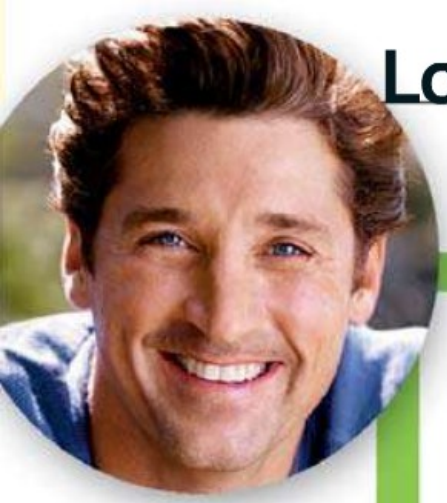

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Reader's Digest .com

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AS SEEN ON TV

Our annual wacky gadget test

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Rx FOR A HAPPY LIFE

Instant mind-set makeover

PAGE 16

WORD POWER SPECIAL

How to sound smarter

PAGE 142

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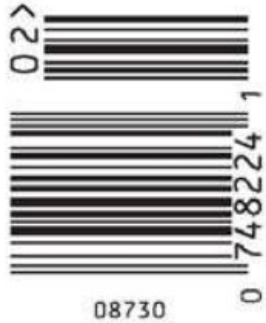

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Metropolitan aquatic garden

Thurs. 10:14 a.m.
Postmodern abstract expressionism

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LIFE WELL SHARED

Reader's Digest

FEBRUARY 2010

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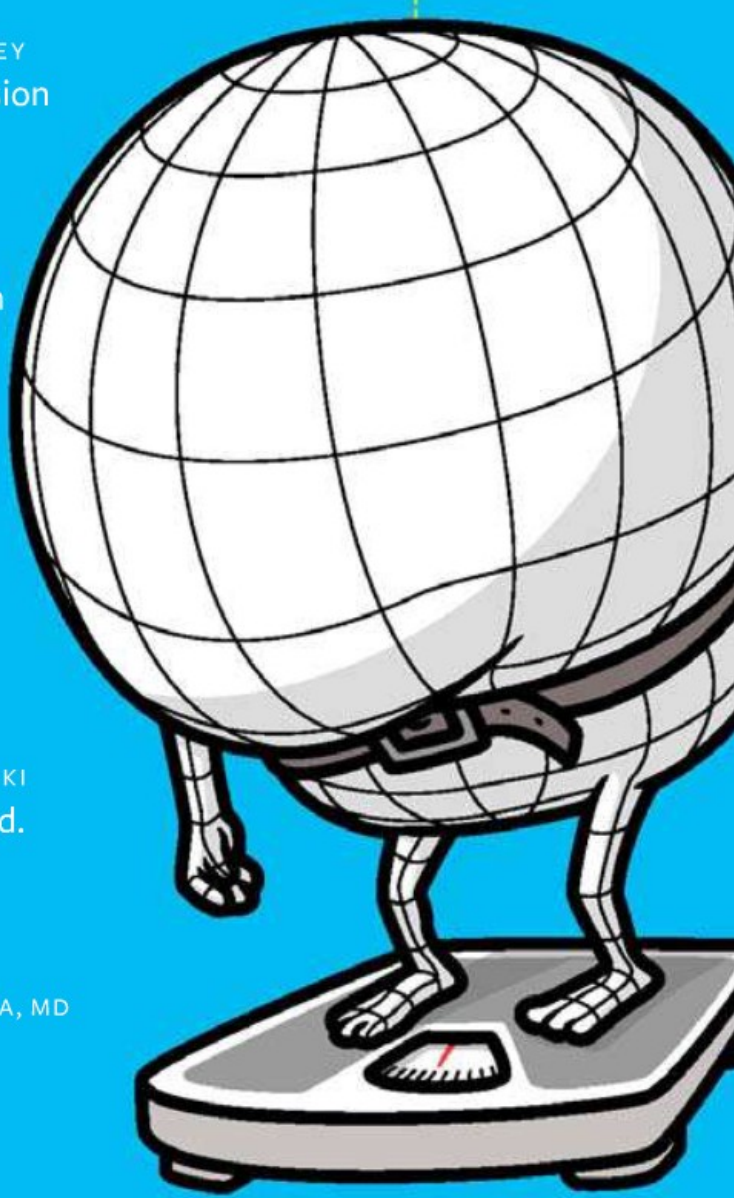

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React

LETTERS ON THE NOVEMBER ISSUE

The 411 on 911

Brittany Zimmermann, the woman whose call was ignored by a 911 dispatcher and who was subsequently beaten to death, was my cousin (Outrageous! "9-1-1 Nightmare"). When Brittany called 911, it was clear that she needed help. The dispatcher may not have been able to save her life, but fast action could have led to the murderer's capture. Dispatchers need to realize that their jobs are no laughing matter.

Amber Andres, Auburndale, Wisconsin

Outrageous!

MICHAEL CROWLEY

9-1-1 Nightmare

Wrong addresses, dismissive dispatchers, and crossed signals. Our police response system is in crisis, and the cost can be measured in lives.

One afternoon in January 2008, Nathan Lee returned home from work to find his two little boys crammed into the same crib, crying. Their mother had left behind her cell phone and purse and disappeared. Within a couple of hours, police in her southwest Florida town had a pretty good idea of what had happened to Denise Amber Lee. She'd been spotted tied up with rope—had even managed to briefly call 911—while in the backseat of a car owned by a 36-year-old unemployed plumber named Michael King.

Around 6:30 that evening, a woman placed an urgent call to 911 reporting the precise location of King's Camaro. It had pulled up alongside her car at a traffic light, and she could see someone crying out for help and banging on the back window. (She thought it was a child.) Just a few miles away, police were desperately searching for Denise with dogs and a helicopter.

Michael Crowley is a senior editor at the New Republic.

57

I am a 911 dispatcher entering my 18th year of service. For every horror story, there is a story with miraculous results. In 1995, a six-year-old boy called and said his mother couldn't breathe. After talking with him, I determined that his mother was having an allergic reaction to a bee sting. I asked him if his mother had an EpiPen and told him to stick it in her leg. He never answered me, and once the ambulance arrived, I went on to my next call. Later that day, I learned that my speculation was correct: She had been trying to inject herself, but her condition was so severe, she could not. The boy had used the EpiPen as I instructed, and because of that, she survived.

Matt Bishop,
Public safety dispatcher, Syracuse, New York

My company installs and supports 911 systems, and I get countless calls for tech support from incompetent dispatchers (and even supervisors). We train them to use the software to answer 911 calls. We don't train them in lifesaving techniques, but if they can't click the mouse or hit a button on the keyboard, can they really help save a life?

Anonymous, via Internet

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Trash to Cash

I enjoyed Amy Maclin's story on how to turn castoffs into cash ("Disposable Income"), but I saw no mention of onlineauction.com. I sold on eBay for years, until it was no longer economically feasible for me to pay the higher fees. After researching many sites, I've found onlineauction.com to be a wonderful and affordable alternative for many of us part-time, experienced sellers. And because there's less competition among buyers, you can find some amazing deals!

Melissa Snell, Lake Stevens, Washington

A Thank-You to Our Readers

In this postholiday season, when it's traditional to write thank-you notes for the thoughtful gifts of family and friends, we at *Reader's Digest* want to extend a heartfelt thank-you to you, our readers. Your support is warmly appreciated by our dedicated staff of editors, writers, and customer-care representatives every day of the year.

Happy New Year, and thank you for being part of our global family of perceptive readers, curious thinkers, and generous givers.

Sincerely,

Peggy Northrop,
global editor-in-chief,
and the entire staff of
Reader's Digest

Doctor Dilemma

I once had a doctor who was horribly out-of-date ("Is Your Doctor Out-of-Date?"). A Pap test came back abnormal, and my doctor refused to let me retake the test. Instead, he wanted to schedule a cone biopsy, which he said required an overnight hospital stay and could cause complications for a future pregnancy. I got a second opinion, and had three follow-up tests over the next six months. The outcome? I needed only a safer, 15-minute office procedure to remove precancerous spots from my cervix.

Jill Whitcomb, Bismarck, North Dakota

As a first-year medical student, I'd like to point out that the doctors of the future are being taught evidence-based medicine as a norm for practice. We're learning when and how to use reliable resources to guide our practice and treat patients in the safest way, based on current scientific evidence—and not relying on personal experience or dated medical knowledge.

Jerry Moulton, Tucson, Arizona

With the current problems doctors face—scurrilous malpractice suits, noncompliant patients, and the health-care system—it's very disappointing to see this tone and perspective. Could the same points

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PRESIDENT OBAMA'S FIRST-YEAR GRADE ... THE READER'S DIGEST VERSION

We asked readers on our e-mail panel to grade President Obama on his first year in office. He received average to above-average grades from 56% of respondents, but nearly 25% failed him. What others had to say:

>> "Grade A: He has retained his optimism and perseverance."
J. S., Carlsbad, New Mexico

>> "A: He stays away from cheap-shot politics." *R. G.*, San Jose, California

>> "A: The fact that he received the Nobel Peace Prize sums up his amazing capabilities in my book."
K. D., Winter Garden, Florida

>> "B: He's trying to pull both sides of Congress together but not succeeding." *C. N.*, Trenton, New Jersey

>> "C: Too much spending."
R. B., Abingdon, Maryland

>> "C: He has shown promise but hasn't delivered anything of substance yet." *J. M.*, Louisville, Kentucky

>> "D: Nothing he's done has helped me. I'm worse off than I was a year ago." *E. L.*, Tustin, California

>> "F: He's too young and too inexperienced, and he's trying to do too many things at once."
S. C., Hubert, North Carolina

Want your opinion heard? Join Our Connection, the *Reader's Digest* reader panel, and take part in short surveys. Sign up at readersdigestconnection.com and register to win $30,000.

about getting the best care have been made in a less slanderous manner?
Izak Wessels, MD, Chattanooga, Tennessee

Who in their right mind doesn't know that high blood pressure is dangerous or that staying in bed through hours of crushing chest pain is a bad idea? There are too many people who won't do anything to keep themselves healthy, but the minute a doctor makes a mistake, he or she is penalized. I'm not a doctor, but I wish they would be treated better so the good ones will still be around when I need help.
Anne Rodgers, Elwood, Illinois

Gratitude Attitude

David Hochman is right: Life *is* better when you stop to appreciate others ("Just Say Thanks"). Years ago, I sent letters or made telephone calls to people I wanted to thank for being part of my life and adding to it. There was only one person I couldn't locate: a popular, handsome boy named Ed. I was a shy, gangly kid with low self-esteem, but when Ed paid attention to me, I felt like a princess. We were barely friends, but I never forgot him. When I heard that he was living in Michigan, I wrote to Ed and thanked him for being so kind to me. The night he received the letter, he called me—and practically every night after that. A year later, he returned to Pennsylvania, and we were reunited after almost

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25 years. We've been married six and a half years—all because of a letter of gratitude!

Beth Rittler, Plum Branch, South Carolina

Eating Engineers

The sheer amount of science required to make hardy (and good-tasting) food for our soldiers is amazing ("The Good Food Fight"). Most people take food for granted, but each item of chow for the military is specially designed to serve a specific purpose. After this challenge has been conquered, I hope there will be similar food research and development for school cafeterias too.

Megan Lee, Memphis, Tennessee

Breaking Barriers

It was shameful when the Berlin Wall went up, wonderful when it came down ("The Fall of the Wall"). Now, if we Americans could only get rid of our "Wall of Shame," between the U.S. and Mexico, which causes hundreds of deaths every year [see this issue's "Quick Study: Border Control," on page 116]. We welcome their dollars, their food, their labor, and even their language, but we try to wall their people out. If all Americans could see the ugly wall dividing Nogales, Arizona, and Nogales, Sonora Mexico, and the damage it's caused, we would be ashamed.

Barbara Young, Green Valley, Arizona

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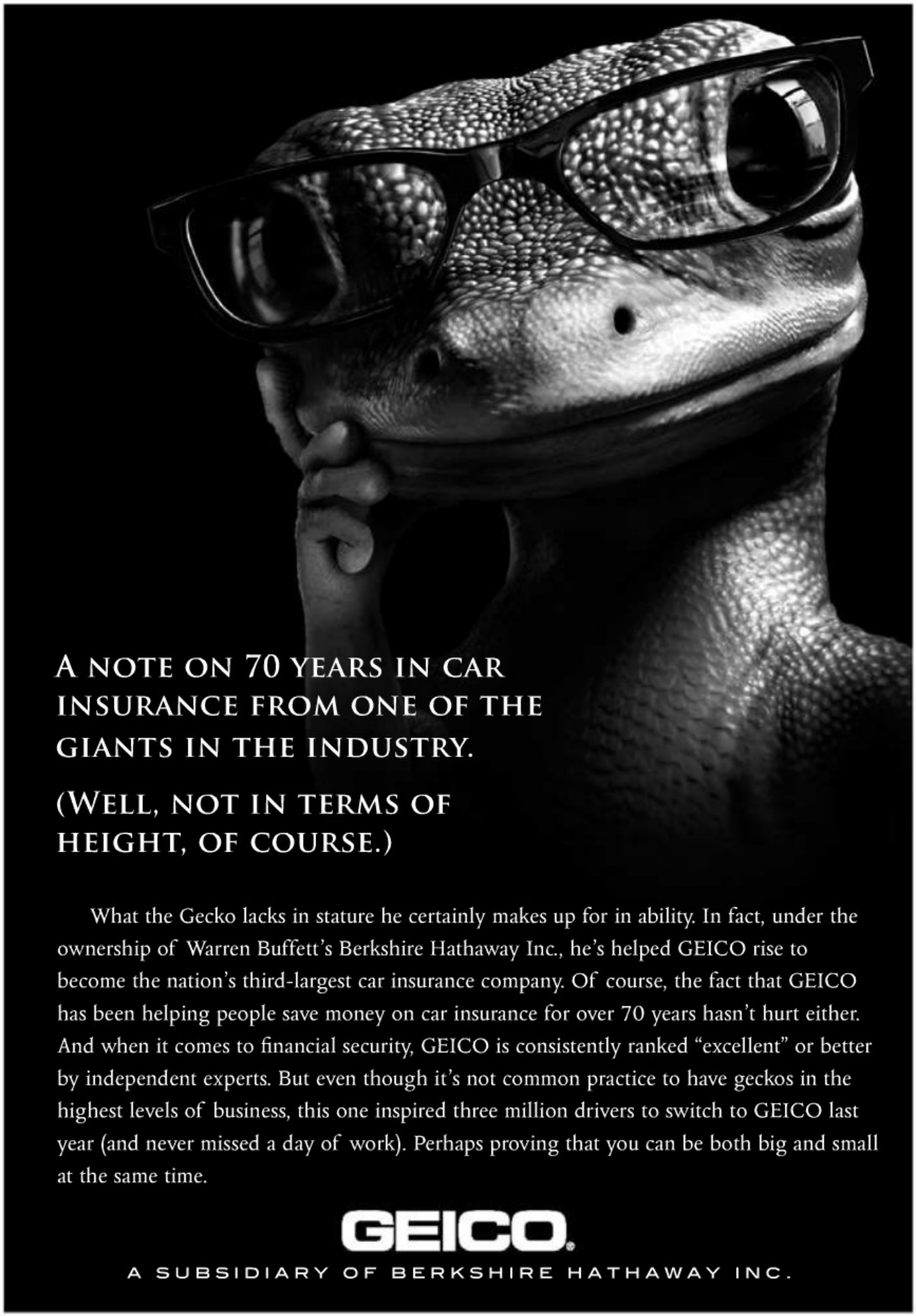

A NOTE ON 70 YEARS IN CAR INSURANCE FROM ONE OF THE GIANTS IN THE INDUSTRY.

(WELL, NOT IN TERMS OF HEIGHT, OF COURSE.)

What the Gecko lacks in stature he certainly makes up for in ability. In fact, under the ownership of Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway Inc., he's helped GEICO rise to become the nation's third-largest car insurance company. Of course, the fact that GEICO has been helping people save money on car insurance for over 70 years hasn't hurt either. And when it comes to financial security, GEICO is consistently ranked "excellent" or better by independent experts. But even though it's not common practice to have geckos in the highest levels of business, this one inspired three million drivers to switch to GEICO last year (and never missed a day of work). Perhaps proving that you can be both big and small at the same time.

GEICO.

A SUBSIDIARY OF BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY INC.

GEICO is the third-largest private passenger auto insurer in the United States as reported by A.M. Best 2008 market share data, June 2009. At December 31, 2008 Government Employees Insurance Company had admitted assets of $12.5 billion, and policyholder surplus of $4.1 billion (including $33.4 million in paid up capital stock). Total liabilities were $8.4 billion, including $7.7 billion in reserves. Additional information is available at: http://www.geico.com/about/corporate/financial-information. Some discounts, coverages, payment plans and features are not available in all states or companies. Government Employees Insurance Co. · GEICO General Insurance Co. · GEICO Indemnity Co. GEICO Casualty Co. These companies are subsidiaries of Berkshire Hathaway Inc. GEICO: Washington, D.C. 20076. GEICO Gecko image © 1999 – 2010. © 2010 GEICO

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The Digest

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"Do not touch." The grandmothers who guard Russia's masterworks in the museums of Moscow and St. Petersburg don't even need to say it. Who would dare try to finger the swirls and brushstrokes under their watchful eye? Sometimes slyly linking the paintings with their protectors, photographer Andy Freeberg has captured 36 of these women in *Guardians* (Photolucida, $40, guardiansbook.com).

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Joy the Reader's Digest Version

Mirth master **Daniel Gilbert** on how to be happy

Harvard psychologist Daniel Gilbert has made happiness his lifelong pursuit. His provocative research—popularized in the bestseller *Stumbling on Happiness* and in his three-part NOVA series, *This Emotional Life* (airing online at pbs.org)—finds that humans are lousy at predicting what will bring us joy. More money? Not really. God? Maybe. Marriage? Definitely. "It's hugely important to be happy," Gilbert says, "and I don't mean walking around with a silly smile on your face. I mean achieving a general sense of satisfaction with life and a sense of well-being." His ideas:

COMMITMENT

"People who commit to relationships are much happier than those who don't. That's why married people are happier than those who just live together. When people

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commit to something that's expensive or difficult to get out of, they report feeling happier. My girlfriend and I had been living together for a dozen years, and those findings seemed so clear to me that I went home and proposed. Now we're married, and I do love my wife more than I loved my girlfriend, even though she's the same person. Commitment isn't just a sign of love; it's a cause of love."

> "When we are **connected well to others,"** says Gilbert, "we feel most happy."

LITTLE THINGS

"To increase happiness, worry less about big, big sources of joy and find a steady stream of small sources. When I came to Harvard, if you'd said, 'Name the three greatest sources of your happiness,' I might have said, 'The students, the resources, and the faculty.' Now I would put walking to and from work very high on the list. Do I get ecstasy from walking to work? No, but it's a pleasure that happens reliably twice a day, every day. When good things happen a lot, over time it changes your life."

HANG IN THERE

"Psychologists would have you believe that people are a field of fragile flowers who need to visit a therapist when their shoelaces break. The reality is, people are quite strong, much stronger than they themselves realize. One piece of advice I give people who have just experienced hardship is to just hang on. Let time do what time does well. You'll be surprised in a year and see how much better you are."

GO TO CHURCH (OR SOMEWHERE)

"Churchgoers are happier than non-churchgoers, but not for the reasons people expect. Our best indication is that it's not the religion part that makes people happy. It's the going-to-church part. It's the community part. It's the holding hands and singing. It's the knowing-folks-who-would-bring-you-soup-if-you-got-sick part. Odds seem to me pretty good that you could also get all the benefits out of a really tight stamp-collecting club."

GIVING

"[A recent study] showed that when people were given money to spend, those who spent it on others were happiest. Giving is literally a joy. If you want to feel better about your day, buy the guy in back of you at Starbucks a cup of coffee. Watch the look on his face. That's a long-lasting hit of happiness for you. You'll get your $1.85 back, I guarantee it."

INVEST IN EXPERIENCES

"Experience is almost always a greater determinant of happiness than things are. We want the new car and believe it will bring us happiness. Meanwhile, the vacation seems like a splurge. But if you're going on vacation, odds are somebody's going with you. And when we are connected well to others, we feel most happy. A vacation also creates lasting memories. A car? It sits in the driveway, gets old and rusts, looks worse than the neighbor's, and starts causing you dissatisfaction rather than satisfaction."

David Hochman

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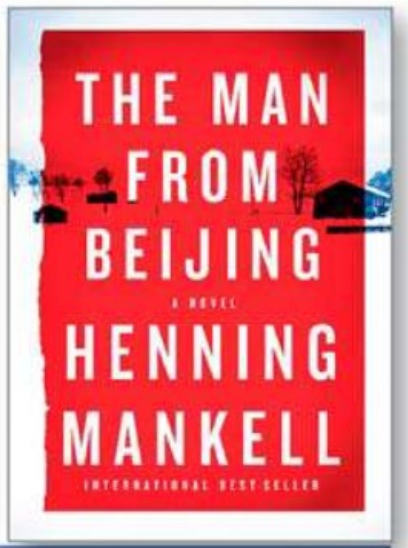
thriller

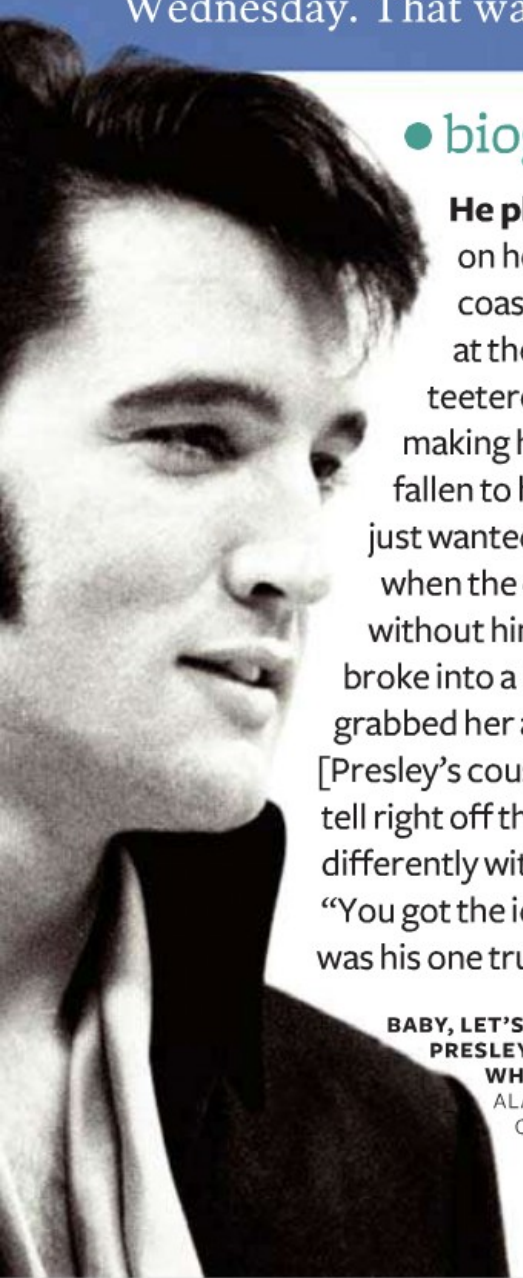


Sundberg had no answers, only a set of circumstances and many dead bodies. She had a couple still alive who had withdrawn to this place in the middle of nowhere from Stockholm, years ago. And a senile old woman in the habit of standing in the road wearing only a nightdress. But there was a starting point, it seemed. Not everybody in the village was dead. At least three people had survived. Why?

THE MAN FROM BEIJING BY HENNING MANKELL (KNOPF, $25.95)

novel

The long matrimonial haul was accomplished in cycles. One cycle of bad breath, one cycle of renewed desire, a third cycle of breakdown and small avoidances, still another of plays and dinners that spurred a conversation between them late at night that reminded her of their like minds and the pleasure they took in each other's talk. And then back to hating him for not taking out the garbage on Wednesday. That was the struggle. **THE UNNAMED** BY JOSHUA FERRIS (LITTLE, BROWN, $24.99)



biography

He played a trick on her on the roller coaster, getting out at the top when it teetered for a minute, making her think he'd fallen to his death. He just wanted to see her face when the car returned without him. Then he broke into a big laugh and grabbed her and held her. [Presley's cousin] Patsy could tell right off that Elvis acted differently with Priscilla ...: "You got the idea that she was his one true love."

BABY, LET'S PLAY HOUSE: ELVIS PRESLEY AND THE WOMEN WHO LOVED HIM BY ALANNA NASH (HARPER-COLLINS, $27.99)

medicine

Four generations after the first aviation checklists went into use, a lesson is emerging: Checklists seem able to defend anyone, even the experienced, against failure ... They provide a kind of cognitive net. They catch mental flaws inherent in all of us—flaws of memory and attention and thoroughness. And because they do, they raise wide, unexpected possibilities.

THE CHECKLIST MANIFESTO: HOW TO GET THINGS RIGHT BY ATUL GAWANDE (HENRY HOLT, $24)

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...Your **Florist** Won't Tell You

Sure, you can order flowers at 3 a.m. from 1-800-Flowers, FTD, or Teleflora. But they'll **charge you $15** and then just call us.

Most flower shops restock on **Monday mornings,** so that's the time to place an order. Fridays and Saturdays are good days to ask what's on special.

The trick to **making flowers last:** Cut the stems at an angle and change the water at least every other day. And use the floral preservative we give you, not copper pennies.

Don't forget to **wash the vase with soap** when you change the water. Otherwise, the bacteria clinging to the sides will contaminate your new water.

Out of preservative? Try this: one fourth 7Up, three fourths water, and two or three drops of bleach.

How fresh is your rose? Look closely at **the bottom of the blossom** and see how many outside petals have been removed. The more ripped petals you see, the older it is.

That **cheap glass vase** that came with your bouquet? Most of us will gladly recycle it if you return it.

Fruit is the enemy. It emits ethylene gas, so even in a separate bowl a few inches away, it's a surefire flower killer.

Yes, your flowers look beautiful in the window, but the **heat from direct sunlight** will kill them in a day or two.

Ask for a discount. We give one to senior citizens, professional groups, and customers we like.

You can buy the cheaper Valentine's Day roses at the gas station. But they may droop or lose petals the next day. They were **probably cut weeks ago** and put in cold storage.

It's not your nose. Many flowers today don't have much scent, because growers are breeding for long stems and a lengthy vase life instead.

We didn't choose February. If it were up to us, Valentine's Day would be in the summer, when roses are actually in season.

Sources: Russ Schmitt of Schmitt's Florist in Louisville, Kentucky; Larry Novak of Novak's Flower Shoppe in Maple Heights, Ohio; Tina Stoecker of Designs of the Times in West Melbourne, Florida; Sharon McGukin, author of *Flowers of the Heart: A Bride's Guide to Choosing Flowers for Her Wedding;* and Bob Wollam of Wollam Gardens, a commercial cut-flower farm in Northern Virginia. Interviews by Michelle Crouch.

More things your florist won't tell you are at readersdigest.com/florist.

ICONS BY CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

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BIG IDEA

work

"Take this job and shove it." That's what employees could be telling bosses as jobs become more prevalent. *BusinessWeek* reports that loyalty has dropped 25 percent in the past year, thanks to "layoffs, bonus and benefit cuts, and a halt in promotions." Increased workloads haven't helped: One analyst told Daniel Gross of *Newsweek* that as productivity picks up, hiring has to follow, or "at a certain point, people will start to collapse."

Men who suppress their anger at work are two to five times more likely to suffer a heart attack or die from heart disease, according to a Swedish study in the *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*. The culprit? "Covert coping with unfair treatment ... [and not telling] the 'aggressor' that he/she feels unfairly treated."

environment

New advances in manufacturing may make oil-based plastics a thing of the past. Polylactic acid (PLA) is biodegradable, made from renewable materials, and safe for food packaging, reports the *Economist*. Korean researchers have developed a new, less expensive technique to make PLA.

Many kitchen plastics contain endocrine disrupters that may be linked to breast cancer, leukemia, and other maladies. *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof reports on a symposium at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine that suggests people avoid plastics labeled *3*, *6*, and *7* ("unless they are marked *BPA-free*") and refrain from microwaving or dishwashing plastic containers of any kind.

health

"How much to replace my hip?" Now that patients are paying more of their health-care costs, will doctors start posting prices? Walecia Konrad, in the *New York Times,* says many already are, and they're not above negotiating. Patients may want to check out the going rates at pricedoc.com, healthcarebluebook.com, and outofpocket.com.

To keep people out of his office, Dr. William Sears (a colon cancer survivor) has written *Prime-Time Health: A Scientifically Proven Plan for Feeling Young and Living Longer* (with Martha Sears, RN). His Rule of Twos: Eat twice as often, eat half as much, and chew twice as long. What he eats: "foods that grow in fields, swim in the sea, run on the land, and spend very little time in the factories."

small detail

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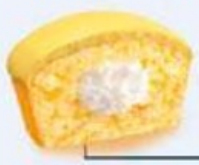

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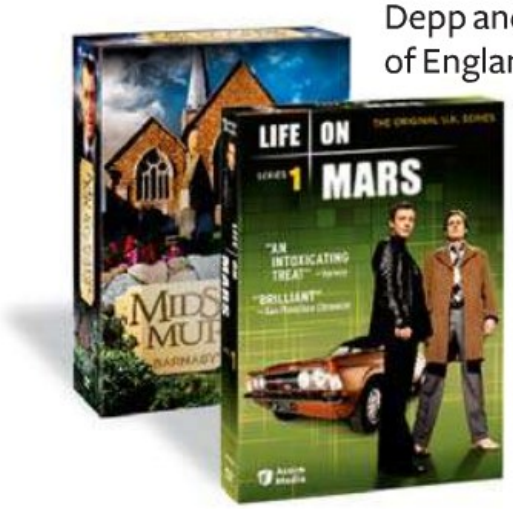
hello

E-mail for the computer-challenged. For a monthly fee, the Celery service will print out a client's e-mails (messages, photos, and the like) on a home fax machine—no computer necessary. It also lets clients send the same things (even simple handwritten notes) to e-mail accounts; mycelery.com.

A fresh batch of English mysteries and police dramas on DVD. For those long winter nights when there's nothing on TV but reruns and tacky self-promoters, try a new collection of *Midsomer Murders*, the series Johnny Depp and the queen of England swear by. If village mysteries leave you wanting a little more grit, try *Life on Mars*, the BBC America series about a Manchester homicide detective who finds himself stuck in 1973.



Hotels as they really are. Tvtrip.com shows more than 20,000 videos of 4,000 hotels worldwide—the rooms, the restaurants, the lobbies, and the neighborhoods they're in. Now you can look before you book.

goodbye

Power cords. Within two years, electricity will be wireless for many devices, reports *Esquire* magazine. Copper coils developed by WiTricity in Watertown, Massachusetts, will send power through the air.

Heavy batteries. Look for cheaper, longer-lasting batteries, too—powered by ... air. As a result, says the *Economist*, your cell phone may soon be even smaller and lighter.

Eggo waffles. Expect extended shortages of the kid-friendly breakfast staple, reports the *Washington Post*. Mechanical problems at the waffle maker's Atlanta and Tennessee facilities are to blame.

word of the month

Narcotecture = buildings constructed with narcotics money, notably in Kabul, Afghanistan, and other centers of drug activity.

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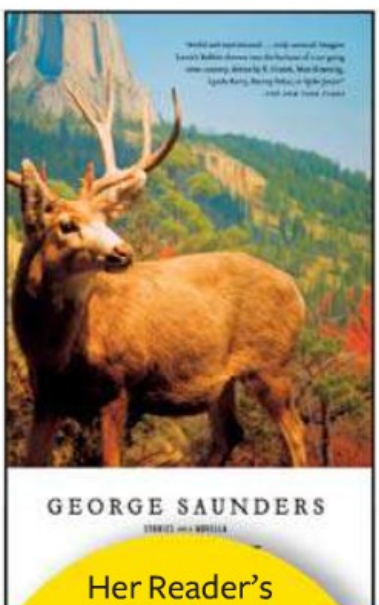
Susan **Sarandon** won the best actress Oscar for her role in *Dead Man Walking* (1995) and has been nominated four other times.

WHAT SHE'S READING

"I'm into George Saunders, so I'm reading *Pastoralia*, his collection of short stories and a novella. I find him absurd, incredibly moving, and weird. I read *Zeitoun*, by Dave Eggers, the true story of a man who was held in New Orleans after Katrina without any representation."



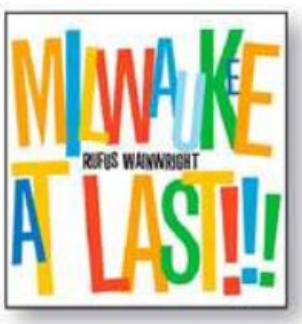
Her Reader's Digest Version of

LIFE AND WORK

"Accept your mistakes, learn from them, and move on. And try to be in the present as much as you can."

WHAT SHE'S PLUGGING

The Lovely Bones, based on Alice Sebold's 2002 novel about a murdered teen who watches over her family. "My character [Grandma Lynn] is there to let the sunshine and air back into this family. She's well intentioned but bumbling, which was fun. [I'm] the one who insists that everyone move on and live life."



WHAT SHE'S LISTENING TO

"Rufus Wainwright. I love him. I find his music powerful and uplifting. It makes me braver. And Of Montreal, a new group I just found, plus Pearl Jam's new album, and, of course, Springsteen. I listen on iPods that my kids give me."

WHAT SHE'S WATCHING

"*Arrested Development*. My youngest son [Miles, 17] decided to have a marathon of it, so I've been watching a few episodes just about every night. I'm dreading getting to the end. It's so smart and well written, the actors are all so good, and it makes me laugh every time. And my daughter [Eva, 24] is on *Californication*, so I'm watching that."

WHERE SHE'S SURFING

"Not interested! Oh, God, no. I've got too much information already. I did finally break down and start texting about a year ago because my kids weren't answering their phones as often as I'd like. So I text. That's it."

Interview by *Maureen Mackey*

ILLUSTRATED BY ZACH TRENHOLM; (THE LOVELY BONES) BARRY WETCHER/DW STUDIOS LLC; (ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT) 20TH CENTURY FOX/KOBAL

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Laugh!:)

A French tourist walks into a McDonald's in New York and orders wine. The guy in line behind him snorts, "They don't serve wine here, you moron!"

"You mean," says the Frenchman, "you're here for the food?"

Submitted by *L. B. Weinstein*

"Pardon me."

After reading up on the finer points of ice fishing, a young woman heads onto the ice. Just as she's about to drill her first hole, a booming voice from above bellows, "There are no fish under the ice!"

The woman is startled, but she keeps drilling.

Again the voice thunders, "There are no fish under the ice!"

Now the woman is shaking. But she takes a deep breath, and just as she's about to cut a new hole—

"There are no fish under the ice!"

The frightened woman looks skyward and asks, "Is that you, Lord?"

"No, this is the manager of the skating rink!"

Beau Jest

When my sister was in high school, she went out with the captain of the chess team. My parents loved him 'cause they figured any guy who took three hours to make a move was okay. Comic *Brian Kiley*

Men are attracted to women with a raspy voice. We think, Hey, maybe she's all done yelling.

Comic *Moody McCarthy*

I don't know why Cupid was chosen to represent Valentine's Day. When I think about romance, the last thing on my mind is a short, chubby toddler coming at me with a weapon. Comic *Paul McGinty*

A millionaire, a hard hat, and a drunk are at a bar. When they get their beers, they notice a fly in each

ILLUSTRATED BY DANIEL BEYER

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HAVE I GOT A DEAL FOR YOU! *By Frank Ferri*

Selling cars today is tough. These new options should help.

Mobility Package: Four tires, engine, ignition.

OnDemand Stationary Package: Brakes.

Navigation Package: Steering wheel and blinkers with directional wand.

Enclosure Package: Four doors and trunk lid.

iVault Package: Includes everything in the Enclosure Package plus handles and locks for doors and trunk lid.

Climate Control Package: Roof.

Climate Control Premium Package: Includes everything in the Climate Control Package plus front and rear windshields and movable windows.

Climate Control Elite Package: Includes the Climate Control Premium Package plus window cranks to replace pushing glass up and down by hand.

Comfort Package: Seats.

Audio Package: Mel, your salesman, will sing to you from the backseat.

mug. The millionaire politely asks the bartender for another beer, then proceeds to sip it. The hard hat spills out just enough to get rid of the fly and quaffs the rest.

It's now the drunk's turn. He sticks his hand into the beer, grabs the fly by the wings, and shouts, "Spit it out! Spit it out!"

I think the Discovery Channel should be on a different channel every day. Comic *Craig Sharf*

A couple of dog owners are arguing about whose pet is smarter.

"My dog is so smart," says the first owner, "that every morning he waits for the paperboy to come around. He tips the kid and then brings the newspaper to me, along with my morning coffee."

"I know," says the second owner.

"How do you know?"

"My dog told me."

Submitted by *Sourabh Bhatia*

A Little Too Personal

On the prowl for a mate? Here are some real personal ads to avoid.

"The celebrity I most resemble is Potsie from *Happy Days*."

"All humans are 99.9 percent genetically identical, so don't even think of ending any potential relationship with 'I just don't think we have enough in common.'"

"They call me Mr. Boombastic. You can call me Monty. My real name, however, is Quentin. But only Mother uses that. And Nanny. Monty is fine, though. Anything but Peg Leg." Source: the *Guardian*

Your favorite new joke, funny anecdote, or crazy news story might be worth $$$. See page 48 for details.

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Depression can make you feel like you have to wind yourself up to get through the day.

PRISTIQ. Proven to treat depression.

Depression is a serious medical condition that can take so much out of you. You may experience frequent sadness, a loss of interest, lack of energy, and trouble concentrating.

PRISTIQ is thought to work by affecting the levels of two chemicals in the brain, serotonin and norepinephrine.

PRISTIQ may be a key in helping to treat your depression. So ask your doctor about PRISTIQ.

Pristiq®
desvenlafaxine
EXTENDED-RELEASE TABLETS

May 2009

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Important Safety Information

PRISTIQ® (desvenlafaxine) is a prescription medication approved for the treatment of major depressive disorder in adults.

Suicidality and Antidepressant Drugs
Antidepressants increased the risk compared to placebo of suicidal thinking and behavior (suicidality) in children, teens, and young adults. Depression and certain other psychiatric disorders are themselves associated with increases in the risk of suicide. Patients of all ages who are started on antidepressant therapy should be monitored appropriately and observed closely for clinical worsening, suicidality, or unusual changes in behavior. PRISTIQ is not approved for use in children under 18.

- People taking MAOIs should not take PRISTIQ.
- All patients taking antidepressants should be observed closely for signs that their condition is getting worse or that they are becoming suicidal. This is very important when an antidepressant is started or when the dose is changed. Patients should be watched for becoming agitated, irritable, hostile, aggressive, impulsive, or restless. These symptoms should be reported to the patient's healthcare professional right away.
- Tell your healthcare professional about all prescription and over-the-counter medications you are taking or plan to take, including:
  - Medicines to treat migraines or mood disorders, to avoid a potentially life-threatening condition
  - Aspirin, NSAID pain relievers, or blood thinners because they may increase the risk of bleeding
- PRISTIQ may cause or make some conditions worse, so tell your healthcare professional about all your medical conditions, including if you:
  - Have high blood pressure. Your blood pressure should be controlled before you start taking PRISTIQ and monitored regularly
  - Have heart problems, high cholesterol or triglyceride levels, or a history of stroke
  - Have glaucoma or increased eye pressure
  - Have kidney or liver problems
  - Have or had mania, bipolar disorder, seizures, or convulsions
  - Have low sodium levels in your blood
  - Are nursing, pregnant, or plan to become pregnant
- Discontinuation symptoms may occur when stopping PRISTIQ, especially when therapy is stopped suddenly. Talk to your healthcare professional before you stop taking or reduce the dose of PRISTIQ.
- Until you see how PRISTIQ affects you, be careful driving a car or operating machinery. Avoid drinking alcohol while taking PRISTIQ.
- Side effects when taking PRISTIQ 50 mg may include nausea, dizziness, sweating, constipation, and decreased appetite.

Please see Brief Summary of Prescribing Information on next page.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

Visit Pristiq.com or call 1-800-PRISTIQ

If you do not have prescription drug insurance and need help paying for PRISTIQ, Wyeth may be able to help. Visit us at www.wyeth.com or call us at 1-800-568-9938 for more information.

Pristiq® desvenlafaxine
EXTENDED-RELEASE TABLETS

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IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT Pristiq® desvenlafaxine EXTENDED-RELEASE TABLETS

(pris•teek')
Pristiq® - (desvenlafaxine) Extended-Release Tablets

Read the Medication Guide that comes with your or your family member's antidepressant medicine. Talk to your, or your family member's, healthcare provider about:

- all risks and benefits of treatment with antidepressant medicines
- all treatment choices for depression or other serious mental illness

What is the most important information I should know about antidepressant medicines, depression and other serious mental illnesses, and suicidal thoughts or actions?

1. Antidepressant medicines may increase suicidal thoughts or actions in some children, teenagers, and young adults within the first few months of treatment.

2. Depression and other serious mental illnesses are the most important causes of suicidal thoughts and actions. Some people may have a particularly high risk of having suicidal thoughts or actions. These include people who have (or have a family history of) bipolar illness (also called manic-depressive illness) or suicidal thoughts or actions.

3. How can I watch for and try to prevent suicidal thoughts and actions in myself or a family member?

- Pay close attention to any changes, especially sudden changes, in mood, behaviors, thoughts, or feelings. This is very important when an antidepressant medicine is started or when the dose is changed.
- Call the healthcare provider right away to report new or sudden changes in mood, behavior, thoughts, or feelings.
- Keep all follow-up visits with the healthcare provider as scheduled. Call the healthcare provider between visits as needed, especially if you have concerns about symptoms.

Call a healthcare provider right away if you or your family member has any of the following symptoms, especially if they are new, worse, or worry you:

- thoughts about suicide or dying
- attempts to commit suicide
- new or worse depression
- new or worse anxiety
- feeling very agitated or restless
- panic attacks
- trouble sleeping (insomnia)
- new or worse irritability
- acting aggressive, being angry or violent
- acting on dangerous impulses
- an extreme increase in activity and talking (mania)
- other unusual changes in behavior or mood

What else do I need to know about antidepressant medicines?

- **Never stop an antidepressant medicine without first talking to a healthcare provider.** Stopping an antidepressant medicine suddenly can cause other symptoms.
- **Antidepressants are medicines used to treat depression and other illnesses.** It is important to discuss all the risks of treating depression and also the risks of not treating it. Patients and their families or other caregivers should discuss all treatment choices with the healthcare provider, not just the use of antidepressants.
- **Antidepressant medicines have other side effects.** Talk to the healthcare provider about the side effects of the medicine prescribed for you or your family member.
- **Antidepressant medicines can interact with other medicines.** Know all of the medicines that you or your family member takes. Keep a list of all medicines to show the healthcare provider. Do not start new medicines without first checking with your healthcare provider.
- **Not all antidepressant medicines prescribed for children are FDA approved for use in children**. Talk to your child's healthcare provider for more information.

This Medication Guide has been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for all antidepressants.

Important Information about Pristiq

Read the patient information that comes with Pristiq before you take Pristiq and each time you refill your prescription. There may be new information. If you have questions, ask your healthcare provider. This information does not take the place of talking with your healthcare provider about your medical condition or treatment.

What is Pristiq?

- Pristiq is a prescription medicine used to treat depression. Pristiq belongs to a class of drugs known as SNRIs (or serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors).
- Pristiq is not approved for use in children and adolescents.

Who should not take Pristiq?

Do not take Pristiq if you:

- are allergic to desvenlafaxine, venlafaxine or any of the ingredients in Pristiq.
- currently take, or have taken within the last 14 days, any medicine known as an MAOI. Taking an MAOI with certain other medicines, including Pristiq, can cause serious or even life-threatening side effects. Also, you must wait at least 7 days after you stop taking Pristiq before you take any MAOI.

What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking Pristiq?

Tell your healthcare provider about all your medical conditions, including if you:

- have high blood pressure
- have heart problems
- have high cholesterol or high triglycerides
- have a history of stroke
- have glaucoma
- have kidney problems
- have liver problems
- have or had bleeding problems
- have or had seizures or convulsions
- have mania or bipolar disorder
- have low sodium levels in your blood
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if Pristiq will harm your unborn baby.
- are breastfeeding. Pristiq can pass into your breast milk and may harm your baby. Talk with your healthcare provider about the best way to feed your baby if you take Pristiq.

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• Serotonin syndrome or neuroleptic malignant syndrome (NMS)-like reactions

Rare but potentially life-threatening, conditions called serotonin syndrome or Neuroleptic Malignant Syndrome (NMS)-like reactions can happen when medicines such as Pristiq are taken with certain other medicines. Serotonin syndrome or NMS-like reactions can cause serious changes in how your brain, muscles and digestive system work.

Especially tell your healthcare provider if you take the following:

- medicines to treat migraine headaches known as triptans
- St. John's Wort
- MAOIs (including linezolid, an antibiotic)
- tryptophan supplements
- silbutramine
- tramadol
- medicines used to treat mood disorders, including tricyclics, lithium, selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), or serotonin norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs)

Ask your healthcare provider if you are not sure whether you are taking any of these medicines.

Before you take Pristiq with any of these medicines, talk to your healthcare provider about serotonin syndrome. See "What are the possible side effects of Pristiq?"

Pristiq contains the medicine desvenlafaxine. Do not take Pristiq with other medicines containing venlafaxine or desvenlafaxine.

What should I avoid while taking Pristiq?

- Do not drive a car or operate machinery until you know how Pristiq affects you.
- Avoid drinking alcohol while taking Pristiq.

What are the possible side effects of Pristiq?

Pristiq can cause serious side effects, including:

• See the beginning of this page.

• Serotonin syndrome or neuroleptic malignant syndrome (NMS)-like reactions. See "What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking Pristiq?"

Get medical help right away if you think that you have these syndromes. Signs and symptoms of these syndromes may include one or more of the following:

- restlessness
- hallucinations (seeing and hearing things that are not real)
- coma
- nausea
- vomiting
- confusion
- increase in blood pressure
- diarrhea
- loss of coordination
- fast heart beat
- increased body temperature
- muscle stiffness

Pristiq may also cause other serious side effects including:

• New or worsened high blood pressure (hypertension). Your healthcare provider should monitor your blood pressure before and while you are taking Pristiq. If you have high blood pressure, it should be controlled before you start taking Pristiq.

• Abnormal bleeding or bruising. Pristiq and other SNRIs/SSRIs may cause you to have an increased chance of bleeding. Taking aspirin, NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs), or blood thinners may add to this risk. Tell your healthcare provider right away about any unusual bleeding or bruising.

• Glaucoma (increased eye pressure)

• Increased cholesterol and triglyceride levels in your blood

• Symptoms when stopping Pristiq (discontinuation symptoms). Side effects may occur when stopping Pristiq (discontinuation symptoms), especially when therapy is stopped suddenly. Your healthcare provider may want to decrease your dose slowly to help avoid side effects.

Some of these side effects may include:

- dizziness
- nausea
- anxiety
- irritability
- sleeping problems (insomnia)
- sweating
- abnormal dreams
- tiredness
- diarrhea
- headache

• Seizures (convulsions)

• Low sodium levels in your blood. Symptoms of this may include headache, difficulty concentrating, memory changes, confusion, weakness, and unsteadiness on your feet. In severe or more sudden cases, symptoms can include hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not real), fainting, seizures and coma. If not treated, severe low sodium levels could be fatal. Contact your healthcare provider if you think you have any of these side effects.

Common side effects with Pristiq include:

- nausea
- headache
- dry mouth
- sleepiness
- dilated pupils
- insomnia
- constipation
- loss of appetite
- tremor
- diarrhea
- vomiting
- anxiety
- dizziness
- decreased sex drive
- delayed orgasm and ejaculation
- sweating
- tiredness

These are not all the possible side effects of Pristiq. Tell your healthcare provider about any side effect that bothers you or does not go away. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. For more information on these and other side effects associated with Pristiq, talk to your healthcare provider, visit our web site at www.pristiq.com or call our toll-free number 1-888-Pristiq.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

Contact Information

Please visit our web site at www.pristiq.com, or call our toll-free number 1-888-Pristiq to receive more information. This product's label may have been updated. For current package insert and further product information, please visit www.wyeth.com or call our medical communications department toll-free at 1-800-934-5556.

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Superior Service

When a customer fell deathly ill, waitress Jessica Grant called on a skill she never thought she'd need

BY JEFF GREMILLION

PHOTOGRAPHED BY WYATT MCSPADDEN

The man eating chicken chimichangas at table 25 asked for more tortillas and a Dr Pepper. Jessica Shafer Grant, eight hours into a 12-hour double shift at Abuelo's restaurant in Abilene, Texas, checked on her other customers, then made her way through the packed eatery and downstairs to the kitchen to place the order. Grant, 29, called "Jay," was well liked at work. The starting shortstop on the restaurant's softball team, she had recently moved to Abilene with her five-year-old daughter and was supplementing the income she earned as

He looks pretty bad, Grant thought. He's not going to make it.

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a dental assistant by waiting tables on weekends.

In the restaurant's courtyard, Walter Wheat, 74, had just polished off a plate of enchiladas. A former sergeant major in the U.S. Army, the grandfather of four had taken on a job as a substitute teacher at an elementary school. "I've been doing that for ten years," he'd recently quipped. "I've been quitting for nine."

The doctor placed his fingers on Wheat's neck, then shook his head. No pulse.

Wheat signed his credit card bill and stood up to leave when he felt "a tingle" pass through him. He dropped his jacket and teetered. "I'm fixin' to pass out," he said. His wife, Doris, 67, and a dinner companion grabbed Wheat's arms and brought him carefully to the floor. Then Wheat, who'd survived a heart attack eight years earlier, stopped breathing and stared up vacantly.

Doris fell to her knees and leaned over her husband. "Daddy, breathe! Breathe!" A man who identified himself as a doctor shot up from a nearby table and rushed to Wheat's side. Wheat's skin was ashen, and his lips were turning blue. A crowd of patrons gathered as the man placed his fingers on Wheat's neck. He looked up and shook his head. Wheat had no detectable pulse. Doris turned to a nearby waitress. "Help my husband!" she cried. "Please!"

Grant was coming down the stairs when she saw a crowd in the courtyard, with Doris sitting on the floor near the center of the group. Then Grant saw Wheat on the ground. She pushed her way in.

"What's going on?" she asked.

"He doesn't have a pulse," the doctor said.

Grant had learned CPR as part of her dental training, though she'd never had to use it before. "Can I give him mouth-to-mouth?" she asked Doris.

"Please!"

The doctor backed away and left the restaurant before anyone got his name. Grant knelt by Wheat's head and bent close to listen for his breath. Then she felt for his pulse. Nothing. He looks pretty bad, she thought. He's not going to make it. She began CPR anyway—I need to do that for him, she thought—alternating between two consecutive bursts of mouth-to-mouth breathing and a series of chest compressions.

Within a couple of minutes, bartender Jeff Womble was at Grant's side. He had been mixing margaritas when the restaurant's manager alerted him to the crisis downstairs. A nursing student, Womble wordlessly took over the chest compressions on Wheat.

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Soon the two workers had synchronized their efforts: Grant breathed into Wheat's mouth, then counted as Womble launched into compressions. "One one-thousand, two one-thousand ..."

The restaurant was nearly silent. Some patrons prayed softly. Doris twisted a napkin in her hands, repeating to herself, "God, please don't take him from me yet."

Grant and Womble persisted for nearly ten minutes. Then Wheat gasped. Grant sat back and told Womble to stop. "Keep going!" someone shouted. "Why are you stopping?"

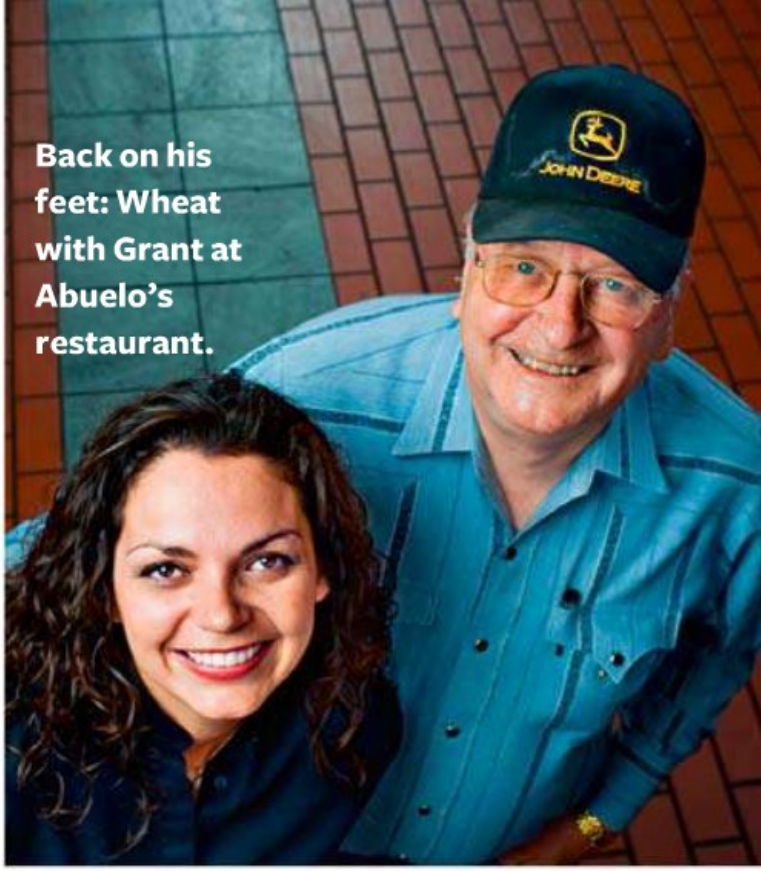
But Grant followed her instincts. "Let's not mess with this," she instructed. "He's breathing."

Paramedics arrived five minutes later and carried Wheat on a gurney through the restaurant and to a waiting ambulance. The restaurant erupted into applause.

But Grant was already upstairs delivering tortillas and a Dr Pepper to table 25, apologizing profusely to the patrons for the delay. After she explained the situation, the customers tipped her $100.

It took Grant an hour to realize the magnitude of the incident, and she trembled from head to toe. Meanwhile, doctors determined that Wheat had suffered a ruptured aortic aneurysm, which kills 90 percent of its victims.

A few days later, Grant and her daughter paid a visit to Wheat in the hospital, where he was recovering from surgery. She hugged him carefully, and Wheat managed a cheerful greeting. "I couldn't believe he was actually talking," Grant says. Doris sat by Wheat's bedside, and everyone in the room held hands, cried, and prayed together. "It was amazing," says Grant. "They treated us like family."



Back on his feet: Wheat with Grant at Abuelo's restaurant.

A couple of months after he was discharged, Wheat stopped by Abuelo's to thank other members of the waitstaff for helping to save his life. "I'm Walter Wheat," he told one server, "and now I'm known as the Miracle Man." Of Grant, he says, "God put her in the spot that night."

Grant has already begun teaching her daughter how to perform CPR and the Heimlich maneuver—now more than ever, she realizes how important it is to know these emergency measures. "I never really expected him to make it," Grant says. "I'm just thankful I was there." ■

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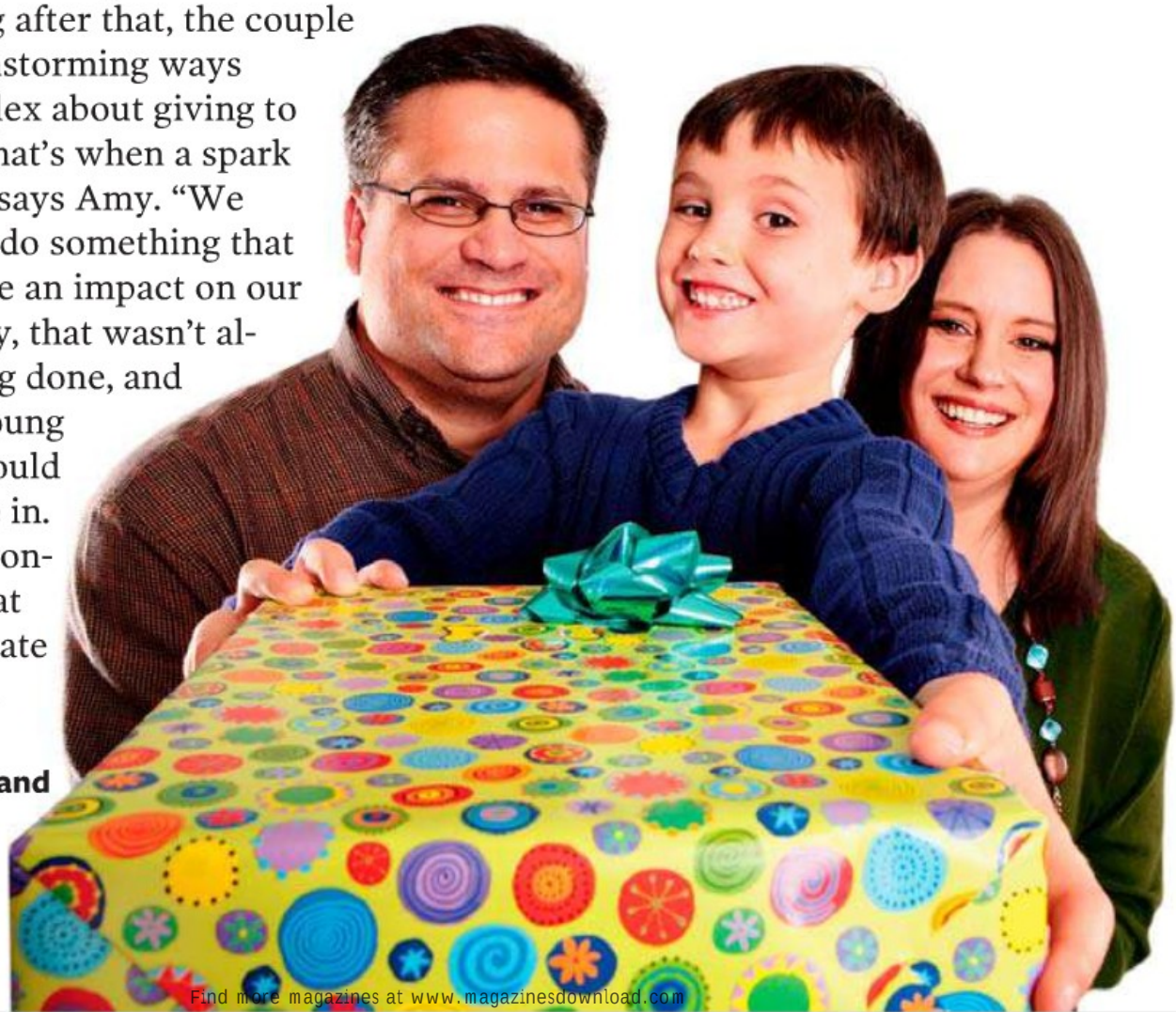
Happy Birthday to Them

One North Carolina couple wanted a way for their kids to help others. The solution: cake, candy, and candles.

BY MICHELLE CROUCH

For John and Amy Cervantes, birthdays have always been a big deal—a welcome excuse to celebrate life. When their eldest son, Alex, turned three, in 2005, they invited 20 friends to a nearby park and hired a clown to paint faces and make balloon animals.

Not long after that, the couple were brainstorming ways to teach Alex about giving to others. "That's when a spark went off," says Amy. "We wanted to do something that would have an impact on our community, that wasn't already being done, and that our young children could participate in. I started wondering what less fortunate kids do on



John, Alex, and Amy with a gift of joy.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY ADAM TAYLOR

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their birthdays. The next day, we called a local shelter." What they learned is that homeless children typically don't do anything to celebrate. No cake. No gifts. No party.

Several weeks later, the family threw a party at the shelter for the children who had birthdays that month. They decorated, served cake, and led 50 kids in the limbo. Alex helped fill and pass out goody bags and presents. When one five-year-old opened her gifts—a pink shirt with glitter, bracelets, and a stuffed animal—she turned to Amy and asked, "Really? I get to keep these?"

"Just look at their faces. Even if it's not their birthday, kids love these parties."

Since that first party, the couple have turned their simple idea into Birthday Blessings, a nonprofit that hosts monthly parties at ten shelters in and around Charlotte, North Carolina. The group also delivers baby supplies to new moms in the shelters. And it discreetly sends treats to elementary schools so homeless kids can celebrate their birthdays with friends.

To date, Birthday Blessings (birthdayblessings.org) has thrown more than 500 parties and handed out over 22,000 favors to nearly 4,000 homeless children. The idea is spreading fast, with affiliate chapters set to launch in Atlanta, Cincinnati, and northeast Indiana.

Recently, eager children watched volunteers at a Salvation Army shelter hang streamers and set out a huge cake. "Just look at their faces," says Karen Prioleau, director of the center's Boys & Girls Club. "Even if it's not their birthday, they love these parties."

The children played bingo and made pictures with colored sand, then oohed and aahed as six kids opened their gifts. One girl pulled various Hannah Montana items out of a bag while wondering out loud how volunteers knew she loved the popular teen singer (a lucky guess, says Amy). Another sniffed a stuffed puppy, incredulous that it was brand-new. And a 16-year-old boy lifted his new basketball in the air like a trophy. "I've never had a big party like this with my friends," he explained.

Birthday Blessings is operated entirely by volunteers—they sort, wrap, set up, greet, and host—with Amy, a stay-at-home mom, at the helm. John juggles his career as an investment adviser while setting up the group's affiliate network and running its capital campaign. About half of last year's $125,000 budget was made up of gifts from area supporters. The charity will take almost anything—toys, clothing, candy, paper products, baby items—as long as it's not used. "These kids

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never get anything new," John says. "It makes a big difference to them psychologically."

Last February, after years of operating Birthday Blessings out of their home, John and Amy moved the charity to a 2,000-square-foot office they lease for $1 a year from a nonprofit with space to spare. There's even a playroom for their three boys—Alex, now seven, Eli, four, and Adam, two.

Being part of this "labor of love," as Amy puts it, is already making an impression on the boys. When Alex turned seven, his grandparents sent a birthday check. "The first thing he said when he opened it," Amy recalls, "was that he wanted to give half to the birthday kids."

Tell us how you or someone you know is making it matter, and your story may appear here. Go to readersdigest.com/makeitmatter.

DIANA ROTHERY

Going Strong

Every Wednesday, Ruthie Culver puts on her makeup and jewelry, hops into her golf cart (or her Buick, depending on the weather), and drives three miles from her condo in Sun City, Arizona, to the Banner Boswell Medical Center for her four-hour volunteer shift.

Ruthie, 103, has racked up more than 1,200 volunteer hours since the day, six years ago, when she called the local hospital to ask if anyone there could use an extra hand. "I just got tired of staying home," says Ruthie. "And I won't quit until they make me." To the staff, Ruthie is an icon of volunteering. If she can do this at her age, they wonder, what's everyone else's excuse?

Ruthie's first gig was in the ICU reception area, then in the cafeteria. These days, she folds laundry. While Ruthie's contributions may seem trivial to some, says Julianne Mudric, director of volunteer services, "they free our staff to focus solely on the patients."

Ruthie enjoys the camaraderie among the staff and her fellow volunteers. "I like that I get to talk to people while I'm there," she says. An attractive single woman (she's twice widowed), Ruthie giggles when she thinks about all the attention, especially from the men who flock around her.

Though she chalks up her longevity mostly to good fortune, Ruthie thinks she's figured out one secret to a long, happy life: "Don't have enemies. Try to look at the good side of everyone and not be critical. There's nobody I don't like." Beyond that, she's as much in awe of her health as others are. "I feel no different than I did 25 years ago," she says. "I play bridge every Thursday, I love to read romance novels, and I watch the news every night. I have no aches or pains." She goes in for a physical every six months. "The doctor sees me coming and says, 'Just turn around and go back home,'" she says. "I don't let him get away with that. I make him take my blood pressure."

Petra Guglielmetti

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PHOTOGRAPHED BY KAREN BALLARD/REDUX

Outrageous

MICHAEL CROWLEY

Vets Deserve Better

Lost paperwork, hostile bureaucrats, and endless delays. The system is failing our soldiers.

ILLUSTRATED BY DANIEL BEJAR

John Wypyszinski was on his second tour in Iraq when a roadside bomb exploded near his vehicle. The Navy medic returned to Millis, Massachusetts, in 2006 with nerve damage to one arm and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) that had him hiding in his basement on the Fourth of July. "I don't like loud noises," he explains. "I'll hear a string of firecrackers, and it sounds like an AK-47." Unable to work at his old job as a civilian emergency medical technician, Wypyszinski sought disability benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs. As his application languished, his wife lost her job and the money ran out. "It looked like we were going to lose our house," he says. It was only after a TV news show picked up his story last fall that the VA approved his benefits—two years after he'd first applied.

It's a national disgrace that men and women wounded in the line of duty should have to wait so long for the help they need just to get by. Yet Wypyszinski's experience is astonishingly typical. "It's a failing

Michael Crowley is a senior editor at the *New Republic*.

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system that has reached the crisis point," warns David W. Gorman, Washington headquarters executive director of the nonprofit group Disabled American Veterans.

Injured American veterans now wait more than five months on average for disability payments. Some

"Never in a million years do you think you'll come home and keep fighting."

11,000 have been waiting over a year. More than 400,000 disability claims now sit unattended at the VA—up from 69,000 in early 2001. Count appeals and requests for information, and the backlog approaches one million.

Worse still, a simple mistake on a form can paralyze the VA bureaucracy. Tonawanda, New York, resident Chris Kreiger spent 15 months in Iraq as an Army medic. He was wounded four times—surviving three bombs and a Humvee accident that crushed his right leg. Back home, Kreiger was plagued by memory loss, seizures, and hearing loss and underwent surgery on his foot and back. But incredibly, the VA rejected his claim. The reason? The doctor who operated on him filled out a form incorrectly.

Kreiger spent many months appealing. In 2007, after nearly three years, a local TV station profiled him, and, just as with Wypyszinski, the VA turned around and awarded him the benefits he was owed. Kreiger had already lost two cars and his house. "Never in a million years do you think you'll come home and keep fighting," he says.

Even before two wars flooded the VA with injured vets, the department's procedures were adversarial and arduous. The VA emphasizes fraud prevention, since payments can be as high as $3,007 a month for a veteran with a spouse and two children. The responsibility lies with the veterans to collect and present their records and prove they were injured in the line of duty. Then they must convince a VA doctor that the injuries keep them from working.

But many veterans don't keep their medical files. And locating documents in the Pentagon and the VA system can be a nightmare, since both bureaucracies rely too heavily on paper records and are notorious for losing files. Veterans with PTSD may have the hardest time digging up documents because the onset of symptoms can occur years after trauma.

Nightmares and disturbing combat memories tormented David Bohan when he returned home from Iraq in 1992. The Oregon native, who had earned a Bronze Star for refueling tanks under fire, hit the bottle, hard. After Bohan crashed his car into a police vehicle last year,

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a VA counselor gave him a long-overdue diagnosis of PTSD.

Bohan spent more nights than he can count digging through old boxes to document his military service, and months later, the VA approved the benefits. But when he sought compensation for a foot injury, neither the Kansas VA Hospital where he'd had three operations nor the VA's records center could locate the paperwork. So he's still trying, 18 months later. "How can you miss three major surgeries?" he asks.

No one denies there is a problem, though the VA has added more than 4,000 new employees since 2007. And Deputy Undersecretary for Benefits Michael Walcoff says that has helped reduce wait times in general from 178 days last year to about 160 days now. But while the average wait time has decreased, it's still scandalously long. "Veterans deserve better service than we're able to give them at this point," he acknowledges.

Linda Bilmes, a professor of public policy at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, recommends specific changes to make the process better:

- The VA should improve how it records files electronically. Upon a soldier's discharge, a full medical exam should be transmitted electronically to the VA, which would drastically cut the number of lost and incomplete files.
- The VA should assume claims are legitimate, then rely on random audits to catch ineligible payments.
- The VA should reduce its cumbersome disability rating system from as many as ten categories of severity and compensation to four.

All necessary changes, but vets like Chris Kreiger aren't waiting. He has started his own nonprofit organization, Western New York Heroes, which raises money to assist veterans. He and eight volunteers also help vets and active service members in the area navigate the VA. "If a vet can't pay utilities or put food on the table, then for that month, we'll take care of it," he says. "Who can sit around for a year with no money and expect to survive?"

Outraged? Tell Michael Crowley about it at readersdigest.com/crowley.

Do More

> **Connect.** Confronting the VA alone can be tough. If you're a disabled veteran or know someone who is, contact a support group like the American Legion (legion.org) or Disabled American Veterans (dav.org) for help.

> **Call Congress.** Make sure your representatives hear from you. Tell them the VA needs to be modernized and reformed as soon as possible: 202-224-3121.

> **Help out.** Groups like Disabled American Veterans welcome donations and volunteers. You can also support Chris Kreiger's efforts at wnyheroes.com.

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@Work

I returned home from my ninth business trip of the year with a severe bout of jet lag–induced foot-in-mouth disease.

As we prepared to go to sleep that night, I wrapped my arms around my better half, gave her a kiss, and announced, "It's good to be in my own bed, with my own wife!" *Mario Nastasi*

ILLUSTRATED BY H.L. SCHWADRON

Stupid Customer Tricks

One of our hotel guests complained to me about a spraying showerhead: "I can't get in the shower without getting wet!" *Sonya Davis*

A woman at my friend's pet shop pointed to a Labrador puppy. "I want that one," she said. "But I don't want the floor model." *Cinthia Gagnon*

A shoe store customer liked a pair of Reeboks but wasn't completely satisfied. So she stopped an associate and asked, "Does this come in a Nike?" *Alex Chow*

When he blew a wad of money at my blackjack table in the casino, a customer stood up and yelled, "How do you lose $200 at a $2 table?!"

Before I could speak, another customer replied, "Patience." *Robert Gentry*

A patient at the dental office where I work stopped by my desk to pay her bill. She began rummaging through her purse, as so many patients do when they have a check to write.

"Do you need a pen?" I asked, offering her mine.

"Yes, thank you,"

The worst ad campaign ever, spotted at a Mexican fast-food restaurant: A sign behind the counter read "It's a fact tacos is brain food." *Brigid Bush*

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TEACH YOUR CHILDREN WELL

These actual student answers illustrate why teachers need summers off.

Teacher: What is an evangelist?
Student: Someone who plays the evangelo.
Donna Saperstone

Teacher: Why can't freshwater fish live in salt water?
Student: The salt would give them high blood pressure. *Jill Sainte*

Teacher: Mira went to the library at 5:15 and left at 6:45. How long was Mira at the library?
Student: Not long.
Lisa Karnes

she replied. She took it, put it in her handbag, and proceeded to pay in cash. *Fran Cole,* on gcfl.net

An employment website boasted that it provided training, counseling, and placement services. What's more, "many services are available in Spanish, and we arrange interrupters." *Clara Emlen*

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En route to Hawaii, I noticed one of my passengers in the coach section of the airplane dialing her cell phone. "Excuse me. That can't be on during the flight," I reminded her. "Besides, we're over the ocean—you won't get a signal out here."

"That's okay," she said. "I'm just calling my daughter. She's sitting up in first class." *Dawn Callahan*

After someone stole my brown-bag lunch at work, I complained about it to my wife, who offered to make me something wonderful the next day. But as I pulled into the plant's parking lot, I noticed a guy clearly down on his luck, so I gave him my lunch. I didn't know there was a note from my wife in the bag: "I know who you are, and I know where you live!" *Franklin Bennett*

While auditing one of our departments, an assistant asked me what I was doing. "Listing your assets," I told her.

"Oh," she said. "Well, I have a good sense of humor and I make great lasagna." *Alec Kay*

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- If you are pregnant or trying to become pregnant. It is not known if TOVIAZ can harm your unborn baby.
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NEED MORE INFORMATION?

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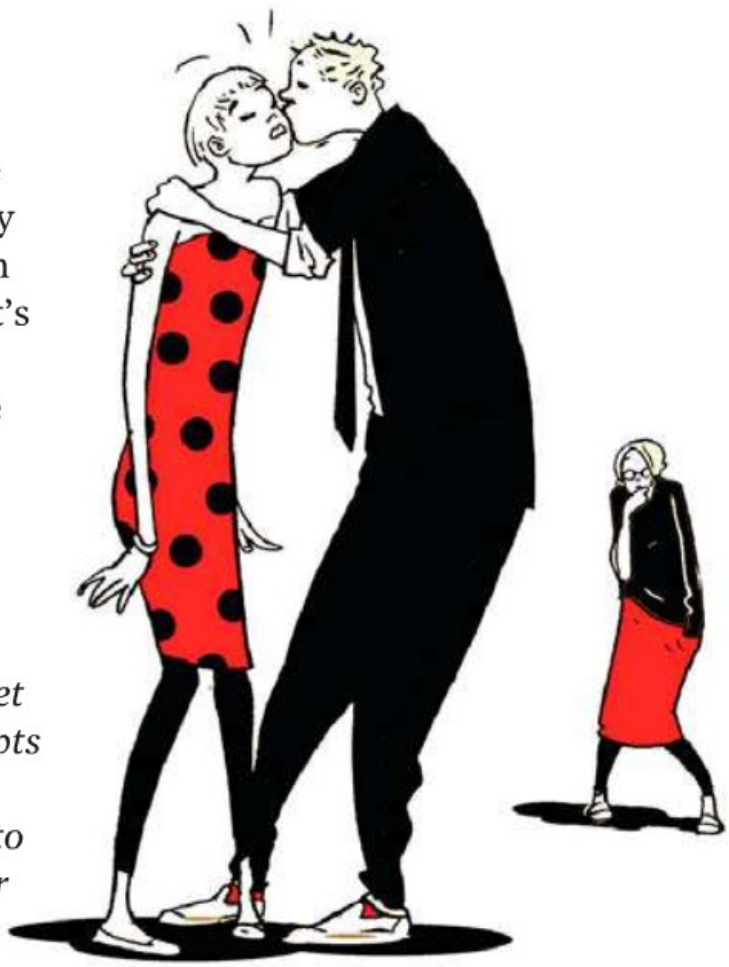
Ask Laskas

JEANNE MARIE LASKAS

My husband and I *have been married eight years (it's the second marriage for both of us). He comes from a family of kissers. When he's greeting his family, it doesn't bother me, but whenever we see my friends, he kisses them on the cheek instead of offering a hug. It makes me uncomfortable. Am I overreacting?* *Hugs but No Kisses*

Dear Hugs,
What's the vibe? Does he creep out you and your friends? Is there an ick factor? If so, reel him in. My guess, however, is that he's just an overly enthusiastic greeter. If that's the case, relax and learn to enjoy Mr. Smooch, who appears to have given you little else to complain about in eight years.

My supervisor is *a nonstop talker, and she's made me and a coworker her audience. We can't get our work done because she interrupts us to gossip and complain about other people in our department or to talk about her family. My coworker and I are increasingly frustrated, but because she's our immediate supervisor, we don't dare address it without risk of repercussions. Or do we?* *Worker Bee*



FRANK VERONSKY

Dear Worker,
Why does Blabber Boss have so much time on her hands? Chances are, someone higher up the chain of command is wondering about

ILLUSTRATED BY ISTVAN BANYAI

Jeanne Marie Laskas is not a shrink, but she does have uncommon sense.

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her (and your!) paltry productivity. Document your duties. Make a daily to-do list and hang it where she can see it. Next time she tries to gossip, show her the list and say, "Look at all I still have to do!"

My dad and his wife *live with my grandfather. On my last visit, my grandfather told me he had given $50,000 to my aunt, who had financial problems. He claimed that, to be fair, he had given each of his three kids that amount. Later, he asked me not to discuss the money with my father. I know my dad didn't get $50,000. I'm close to him, and I don't normally keep secrets from him, but I also don't want to betray my grandfather. What should I do?*

Secret Bearer

Dear Secret,
Here we have a good case of Mind Your Own Beeswax (for everyone's sake, but especially yours). Grandpa should never have burdened you with this information. Enjoy your visits home and avoid, at all cost, the politics, conflicts, and posturing of the older generations.

My fiancée and I *plan to wed in three months. At a family gathering, I recently learned that her parents (who are from another country) are first cousins. My intended does not think this is a big deal; in her country, it was customary for people of her parents' generation. My friends say we should get genetic counseling or even forget about getting married. I love my fiancée, but I don't know what to do.*

Country Cousin

Dear Country,
You and your beloved are not related by blood and thus are at no more risk than anyone else in the general population of similar age. Tell your friends to butt out, and take good care of your bride.

Life's Little Etiquette Conundrums

It happened again last night. I was at a fund-raising dinner, and when the emcee began speaking, no one in the room paused to listen. The poor man ended up shouting down the crowd. I appealed to those at my table, but I got only strange looks and they kept talking. Eventually, I fled to the ladies' room; I was embarrassed to be seen at that disrespectful table. How do you handle this situation?

I completely understand your desire to flee, but I urge you, next time, to fight. Now, more than ever, in our increasingly rude society, banqueters across the land need you to stand up for what's right. Be the husher! If they give you looks, stare back and shush them! Trust me, there are others in that hall who need only a little encouragement to join you in the hushing. Lead the counterattack of the polite people!

Send questions about manners, parents, partners, or office politics to readersdigest.com/laskas. Sending gives us permission to edit and publish.

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Never Say No, Non, Nein, or Nee

Liz Elting's company spells success in more than 100 languages

BY MARGARET HEFFERNAN

It was an international drug trafficking case, one that involved a lot of money and a lot of violence. Undercover agents who had infiltrated the cartel had worn wires and collected evidence for years. A conviction depended on an accurate translation of their tape recordings. "Five languages were involved," says Liz Elting, 44, one of the owners of TransPerfect, the translation company chosen for the job. "The slightest mistake could mean the criminals would go free." For weeks, company linguists worked

PHOTOGRAPHED BY MELANIE DUNEA

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closely with prosecutors and agents to help win a conviction.

When Elting launched her business 18 years ago with Phil Shawe, both were attending New York University's Stern School of Business. Neither realized just how many situations would require their services. "We've transcribed black box data after plane crashes," says Elting. "We've done mergers and acquisitions. Translating *Hooked on Phonics* into eight languages was especially challenging because we were doing sounds, not words!"

"We've transcribed black box data and done mergers and acquisitions."

Elting had once worked for a translation company, and she knew that the industry was essentially lots of tiny outfits delivering patchy quality. She also knew how important it was to get things right—like the instructions for medical devices. Ad companies, too, needed accurate translations that took cultural differences into account. She and Shawe were certain that if they delivered a quick, reliable service, they could build an international business that would stand out.

They set up shop in Shawe's dorm room. (The two were engaged until 1997. Though the wedding never happened, the company forged ahead.) While Shawe finished his MBA, Elting recruited freelance linguists and made hundreds of cold calls seeking clients. One of their first jobs was to translate an 800-page feasibility study of a Russian gold mine in 30 days.

Once the partners were out of survival mode, they hired people to help grow the company and told them to run their area as if it were their own business. "If they did well," says Elting, "they owned that success."

Elting and Shawe paid themselves $9,000 a year each and plowed everything else back into the business. Their ambition and naïveté, however, at times threatened the company's growth. In 2000, a major retailer promised $15 million in business—more than double their revenue. They opened an office in Miami, but when the Internet bubble burst, says Shawe, "the client pulled out. Today we get money up front; we share risk. Commonsense things."

TransPerfect's 4,000 linguists cover more than 100 languages. Last year, the company had revenues of $225 million; the average annual growth rate is 30 percent. Elting and Shawe still work together as co-CEOs. "Phil is good at developing systems and creative sales ideas," says Elting. "I focus on operations and making sure our clients are happy." Shawe's take is a little different: "Liz is more risk-

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averse, and I'm more risk-tolerant."

With more than 1,100 employees, and offices in 57 cities in 18 countries on four continents, they still focus on the details. They keep a meticulous list of client preferences: *soda* or *soft drink*, *sofa* or *couch*.

Even now, at the top of the world's largest privately held language company, Elting refuses to be complacent and would prefer a slightly different translation: "We want to be the world's *premier* language company."

Getting Ahead with LIZ ELTING

What inspired you to start TransPerfect?
When I was eight, my dad bought a KFC franchise in Portugal. Unfortunately, the Portuguese didn't want anything American after the Communist revolution. They thought my dad was a CIA spy! That taught me how fast things can change. I've studied in Spain and worked in Venezuela. This business is the perfect combination of my passions for languages, cultures, and business.

Is the staff multilingual?
Many are. I speak French and Spanish. My partner, Phil, who is American, likes to say he speaks English on a good day.

What languages are requested most often?
Spanish and Japanese. Chinese, Middle Eastern, Indic (South Asia), and Eastern European languages are on the rise.

How difficult is it to manage such a diverse workforce?
Our challenge is to be culturally appropriate in every country. When we hand out year-end bonuses in the U.S., for example, we have to remember that in India, bonuses are distributed in the fall.

How important was your early training in finance?
The No. 1 reason companies fail is that they run out of money, so you have to be very aware of the numbers. I've learned that doing a great job is more about the soft skills—going with your instincts, acting with integrity, appreciating clients and employees, and dealing with them effectively. Do these things well, and the rest will follow.

Any advice for someone starting a business?
Get started before you have kids. In the beginning, I didn't know how to do this business on the side. I wasn't married, didn't have kids, and wasn't concerned about balancing my work and personal life. Now, with strong managers in place, I can spend more time with my family [husband Michael Burlant and sons Zachary, nine, and Jason, seven], traveling and playing baseball.

Have a business? Ready to start one? Still dreaming? Get help at readersdigest.com/business.

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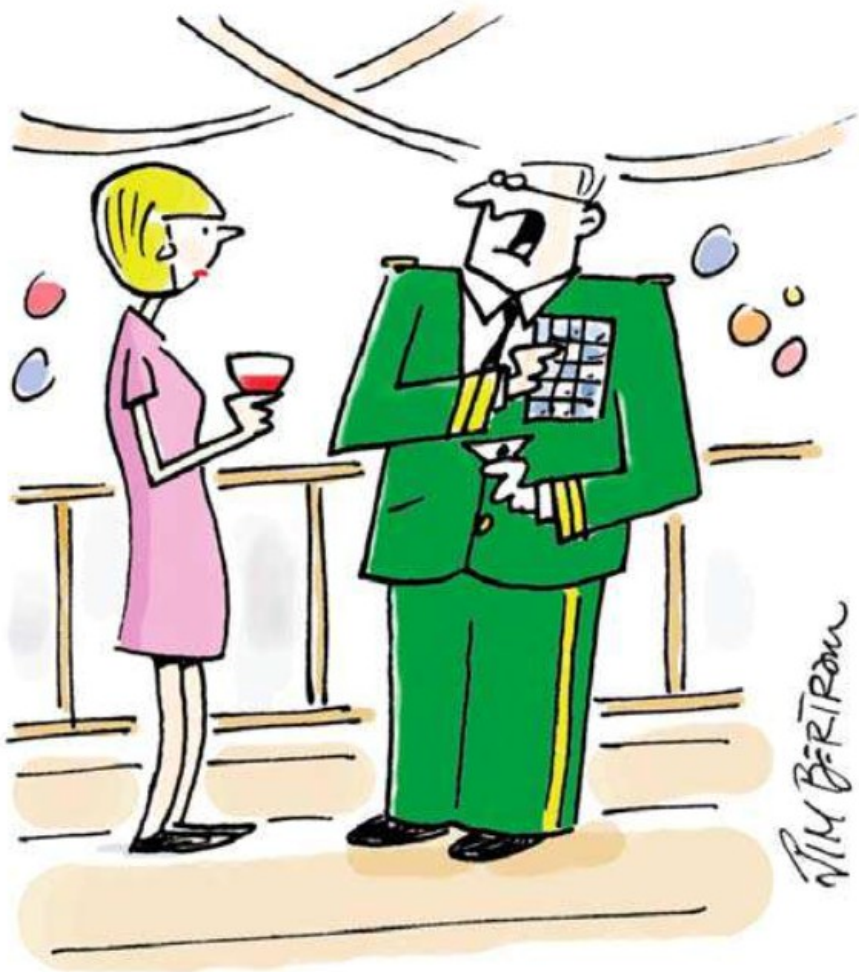
Off Base

Having grown up in a small Alabama town, my friend James couldn't wait to tell us all about life in California, where he was stationed.

"The malls are massive, and the restaurants are great," he said. Then he grinned. "I even went to a topless bar."

"Really?" said his mother, surprised. "What do they do if it starts to rain?"

James Triplett



"They're solar panels."

"Yeah," he went on. "It looks just like my mother's sofa." *Carla Martin*

Playing around with my new iTouch, I decided to get directions to my son's base from my home in Maryland. So I typed "Wahiawa, Hawaii." I got turn-by-turn directions until I hit the coast. Then I was told, "Kayak across the Pacific Ocean entering Hawaii."

Cindy Hays

Marines are known for storming the beaches, not for romance. I witnessed this firsthand at the base in Twentynine Palms, California. One of the enlisted men complimented the receptionist's flowered jacket.

"It's very pretty," he said shyly.

"Thank you," she replied coyly.

Before leaving for Officer Candidates School, I half-jokingly mentioned to my family that I was going to learn how to eat, sleep, shower, and shave all over again. My brother, in the throes of planning his wedding, muttered, "Me too." *Holden Dunham*

Your favorite new joke, funny military anecdote, or crazy news story might be worth $$$. See page 48 for details.

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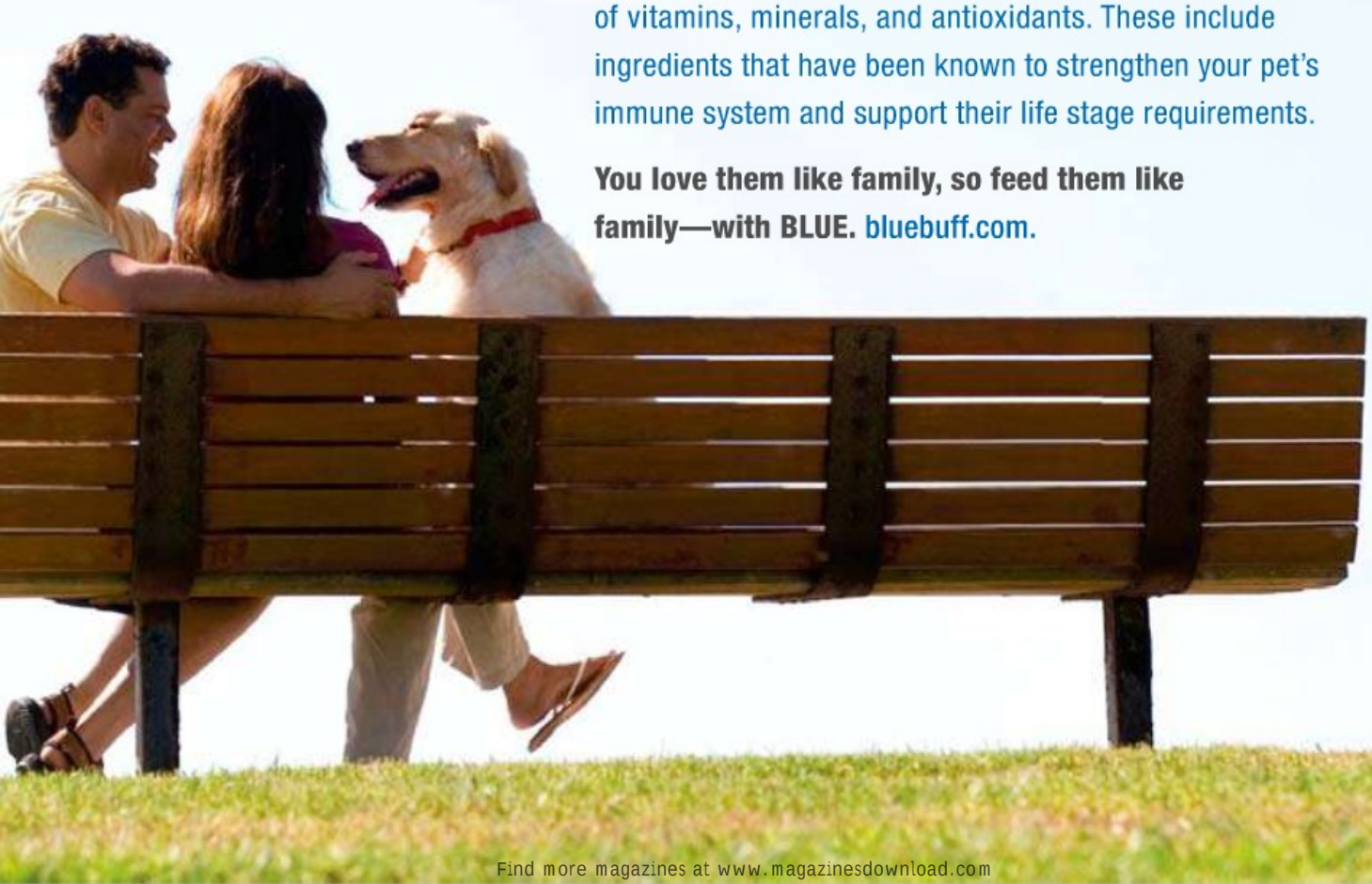

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Here's the Deal

JANICE LIEBERMAN

Deadly Defects

How to safeguard your family, home, and health against faulty products

Remember last year when peanut butter was recalled because of salmonella? There was a flurry of headlines and breathless TV-news accounts. But what happens when a product tiptoes quietly off the shelf? Consumers often end up with a hidden menace in their homes—and don't even know it.

Like my friend Heather. If a child-safety expert hadn't checked her house, Heather would never have learned that the Roman shades she'd bought from Pottery Barn Kids for her five-year-old's room had been recalled because they pose a strangulation hazard. "How was I to know?" Heather said. (In recent years, eight children have died, and 16 were nearly strangled by pull cords. Last December, the federal government announced a voluntary recall of all Roman shades and roll-up blinds.)

The range of defective products is astounding. In the past year, I've seen recalls on Nestlé Toll House cookie dough (a test sample contained *E. coli*), Ford cars (a cruise control switch could cause fires),

ILLUSTRATED BY GORDON STUDER

Janice Lieberman is the consumer correspondent on NBC's *Today* show.

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Toyota cars (floor mats could cause accelerators to stick), Maclaren umbrella strollers (a hinge mechanism cut off fingertips), chenille bathrobes (highly flammable), and Tylenol children's liquid medication (possibly contaminated by bacteria).

Because recalls are usually voluntary—except for baby formula—there isn't a standard method for warning consumers. Manufacturers tend to rely on the media to get the word out. Some post notices on their corporate websites (but who checks those regularly?). Some might call you if you filled out a product registration card. If you bought the item from a catalog, a home-shopping site like QVC, or a membership club like Costco, the retailer may call or e-mail you—if it has your contact information. Some grocery chains, such as Kroger and Wegmans, will call customers who use their loyalty cards. Here's how to stay safe:

Sites for Savings

> **fly.com** Compare flight prices from hundreds of airlines and online travel agencies.

> **managemyhome.com** Step-by-step instructions on how to replace a car headlight (or taillight), tile a backsplash, teach your teen to drive, build a deck, and refinish a hardwood floor.

> **petfinder.com** A database of adoptable pets (they're free or low-fee), with pictures and profiles.

Sign up for e-mail alerts. "It is the single best thing that consumers can do to protect their families," says Scott Wolfson, a spokesman for the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), the government agency that monitors more than 15,000 types of products. Recall information will go right to your inbox. Sign up at recalls.gov.

Seek a resolution. A recall notice should include details about the next step: whether it's a refund, a replacement, or a repair. In Heather's case, the company told her it would pick up the shades and issue a credit.

Report a defect. Once a manufacturer is notified of a defective product, it has to alert the appropriate government agency within 24 hours. It can take three weeks or longer after that to warn the public. If you discover a defective product, call the CPSC immediately (800-638-2772), e-mail the agency (info@cpsc.gov), or fill out a form on its website. Remember to notify the store where you purchased the item.

That's what freelance journalist Mitch Lipka did. "My wife smelled something burning," he says. "I found the mini-flashlight my kids had brought home as a party favor on a table, actually melting." Lipka e-mailed Target, the store where the flashlight was purchased, and was told that it would be withdrawn from every store in the country. When he checked stores in his neighborhood a few days later, the flashlights were indeed gone from

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the shelves. He also notified the manufacturer and the CPSC, which put out an official recall notice.

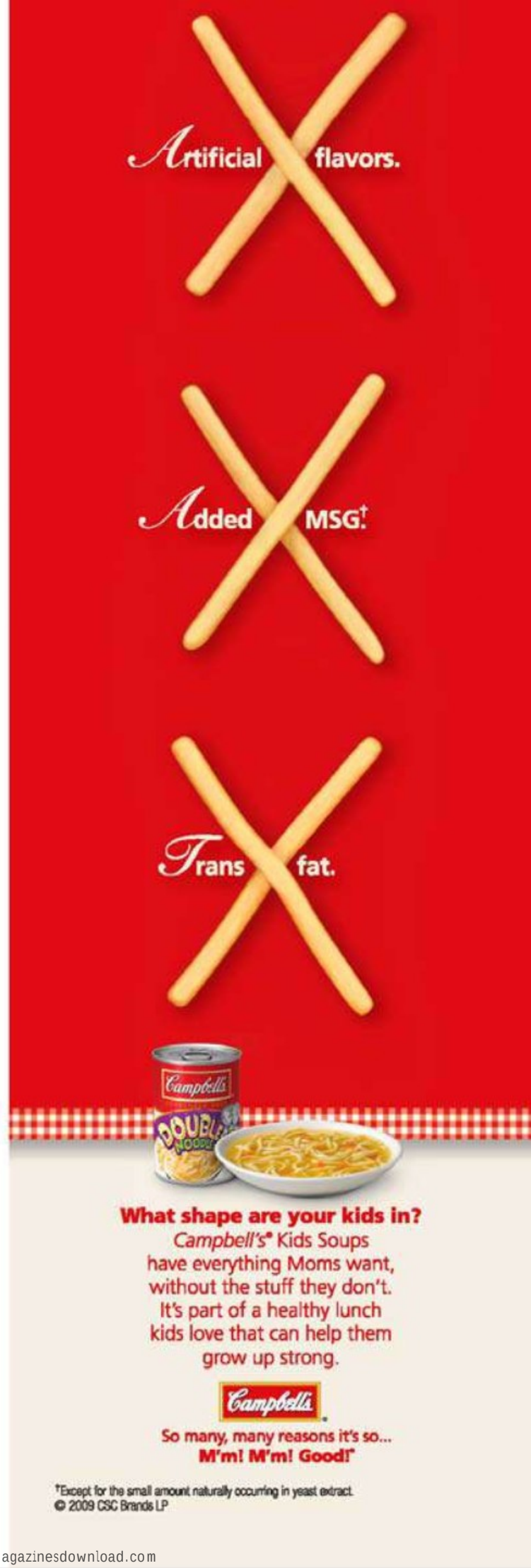
The Not-So-Great Wall

Getting rid of a defective product is more difficult when it's part of your house. If you notice a rotten-egg smell coming from your walls, rapidly corroding wires or metal, or persistent health issues (itchy eyes and skin, nosebleeds, asthma attacks), call your doctor and a building inspector. Your home may be one of thousands built with contaminated drywall made in China. The bad drywall is turning up mostly in homes built during the 2005–2007 housing boom. There hasn't been an official recall, but U.S. and Chinese officials are sampling the drywall and air quality in affected homes to determine the cause of the problems.

If you have a house full of this stuff, you may have to move out. "The house has to be stripped—walls, carpeting, cabinets, appliances, wiring, plumbing—down to the framing," says construction consultant Michael Foreman, who has analyzed more than 400 homes in the Sarasota, Florida, area; 300 had the contaminated drywall.

It's no wonder homeowners and builders have filed hundreds of lawsuits in state and federal courts. The latest wrinkle? American-made drywall may be contaminated too.

Read Janice Lieberman's blog and submit your questions at readersdigest.com/askjanice.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Doctor Love

Patrick Dempsey on his first kiss, his nickname, and his ideal woman

BY DAVID HOCHMAN

Six seasons into *Grey's Anatomy* and Patrick Dempsey—aka Dr. Derek "McDreamy" Shepherd—still makes fans' hearts skip a little as he performs brain surgery within the walls of the show's Seattle Grace Hospital. The actor, 44, dons a dashing doctor's coat again in the upcoming movie *Valentine's Day*, a comic homage to *amore* that stars an ensemble cast, including Julia Roberts and Anne Hathaway. Without the stethoscope, though, McDreamy is more McDude, a family man (he and his wife, makeup artist Jillian Dempsey, have a daughter, Talula, eight, and three-year-old twin sons, Darby and Sullivan) with a low-key approach to romance and a serious passion for ... auto racing? Luckily, that's only one of the things that rev his engine. Here, he confides a few more.

1 **A sense of humor, strength, and, oh God, understanding.** The three things I love in a woman.

2 **My wife's sense of humor.** Her response to my nickname? Amusement.

3 **My wife's strength.** Marriage works best when you're completely open with each other, and free to be an individual, and strong enough to go off and do your thing.

4 **My wife's understanding.** She knows how important it is for me to race, where I can totally recharge myself. Racing rounds me out, so then I can balance my life with my wife, career, children, and myself.

5 **Love before jewelry.** I've never really believed in Valentine's Day. You're anxious about buying the right gift, but it's really about your heart, not a TV commercial for De Beers diamonds. The best Valentine's Days are magical and spontaneous and just sort of unfold.

6 **Marriage.** Once you go through the Romeo-Juliet phase of a relationship, you can become road-

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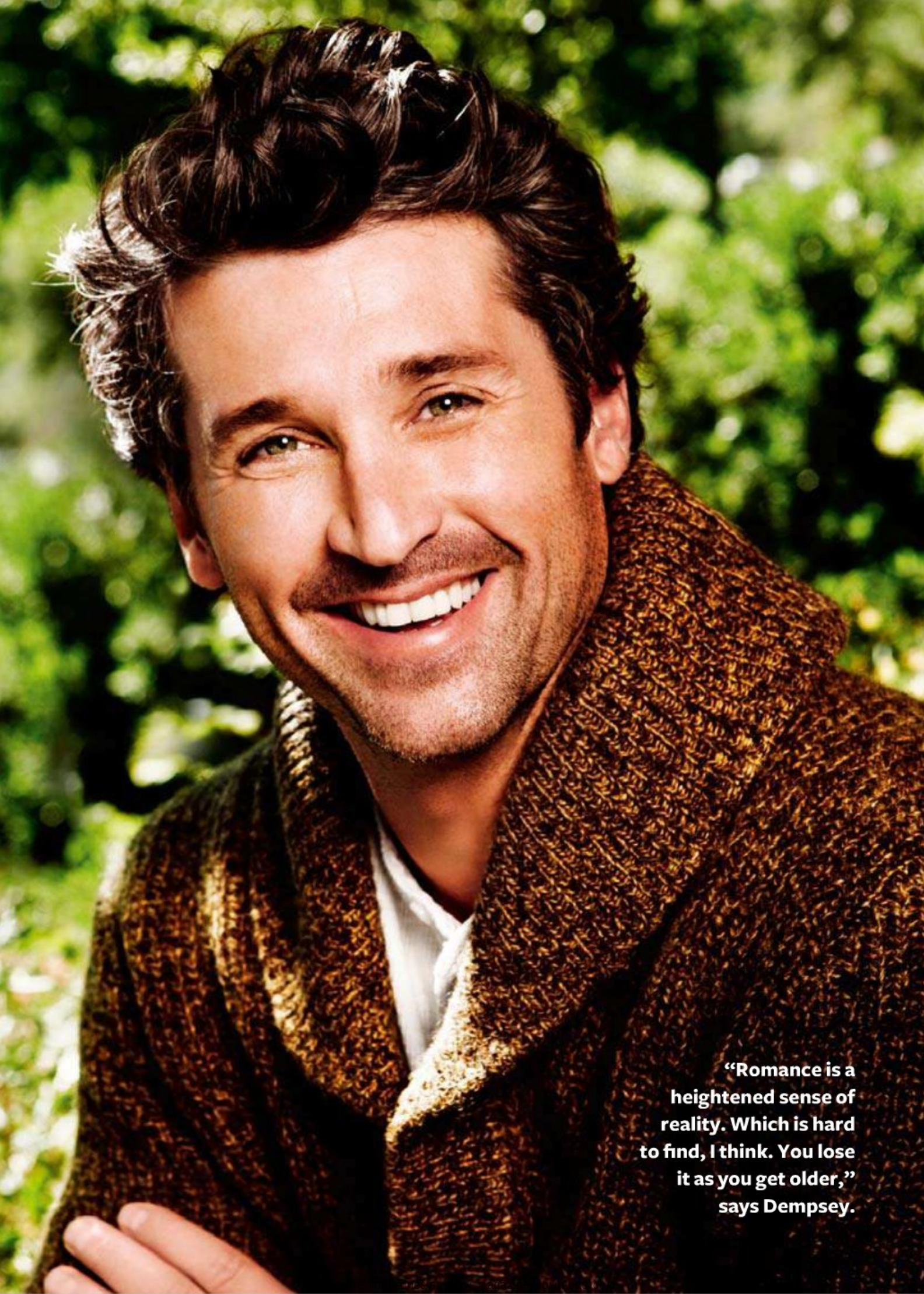

"Romance is a heightened sense of reality. Which is hard to find, I think. You lose it as you get older," says Dempsey.

He makes house calls: Dempsey and Jennifer Garner in a scene from *Valentine's Day*.

weary. The key is to find that childlike innocence and openness again. Little things—Jillian recently surprised me with wood chimes. Anytime the wind blows, it reminds me of her.

7 The girl behind home plate. My first kiss was behind the backstop of a baseball field. I was in fifth or sixth grade and very nervous, intimidated, and unsure. Girls are all-consuming at that age.

8 My lab coat. Did I ever think I was going to be a doctor when I grew up? Nope. But the role is a good fit for me. When you play a doctor, you project a sense of authority and security and safety. I like that energy.

9 Faking it. It's easy to make brain surgery look real because it's all about staying still or making small movements—unlike open-heart surgery, which is much more physical. What's not easy is when we show a brain on TV. Sometimes we use real animal parts, which disturbs people on the set.

10 Sunrise. It's my favorite time. The older you get, and certainly when you have children, you're up anyway. You might as well enjoy it. And then I like going to work. I enjoy the process of making the show. That's a good day. ■

RON BATZDORFF

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Acid reflux disease.
It's got many faces.

And lots of symptoms like heartburn, and even a bad taste in your throat or belching. So, if you have persistent heartburn (2 or more days a week) and other symptoms, despite treatment and diet change, talk to your doctor. It could be acid reflux disease. And find out if prescription ACIPHEX is right for you. Because burning, bad taste, and belching don't look good on anyone.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

ACIPHEX has a well-established safety profile.

In adults, the most common side effects with ACIPHEX include pain, sore throat, gas, infection, and constipation.

Symptom relief does not rule out other serious stomach conditions.

Before taking ACIPHEX, tell your doctor if you are taking atazanavir, digoxin, iron salts, ketoconazole, or warfarin.

To learn more, talk to your doctor and read the patient information on the next page.

In adults (≥18 years of age), one ACIPHEX 20 mg tablet daily is used for the treatment of persistent, frequent (2 or more days a week) heartburn and other symptoms associated with acid reflux disease.

Individual results may vary.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

14 DAYS

Try **ACIPHEX FREE** for 2 weeks!*

1-866-215-1931
TryAciphex.com/31

See the attached voucher.
*Restrictions apply.

AcipHex®
rabeprazole sodium

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01AX2077 December 2009

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PATIENT INFORMATION

ACIPHEX (a-se-feks)
(rabeprazole sodium)
Delayed-Release Tablets

Read the Patient Information that comes with ACIPHEX before you start taking it and each time you get a refill. There may be new information. This leaflet does not take the place of talking to your healthcare provider about your medical condition or treatment.

What is ACIPHEX?

ACIPHEX is a medicine called a proton pump inhibitor or an "acid pump inhibitor". This means it reduces the amount of acid that is made by your stomach. ACIPHEX is used in adults:

- for the short-term (4 to 8 weeks) treatment in the healing and symptom relief of damaging (erosive) Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD).
- to maintain healing of damage (erosions) and relief of heartburn symptoms with GERD. ACIPHEX has not been studied for treatment lasting longer than 12 months (1 year).
- for the treatment of daytime and nighttime heartburn and other symptoms that happen with GERD.
- for short-term treatment (up to 4 weeks) in the healing and relief of stomach-area (duodenal) ulcers. The duodenal area is the area where food passes when it leaves the stomach. The main symptom of a duodenal ulcer is a steady pain in the stomach area.
- with certain antibiotic medicines for the treatment of an infection caused by bacteria called *H. pylori*. Sometimes *H. pylori* bacteria can cause duodenal ulcers. The infection needs to be treated to prevent the ulcers from coming back.
- for the long-term treatment of conditions where your stomach makes too much acid. This includes a condition called Zollinger-Ellison syndrome.

ACIPHEX is used in adolescents 12 years of age and above:

- for the short-term (up to 8 weeks) treatment of GERD.
- The safety and effectiveness of ACIPHEX has not been established for children under the age of 12.

Who should not take ACIPHEX?

Do not take ACIPHEX if you:

- are allergic to any of the ingredients in ACIPHEX. See the end of this leaflet for a complete list of ingredients in ACIPHEX.
- are allergic to any other Proton Pump Inhibitor (PPI) medicine.

What should I tell my doctor before I take ACIPHEX?

Tell your doctor about all of your medical conditions, including if you:

- have any liver problems.
- have any allergies.
- are pregnant or planning to become pregnant. It is not known if ACIPHEX can harm your unborn baby.
- are breastfeeding. It is not known if ACIPHEX passes into your breast milk or if it can harm your baby. You should choose to breastfeed or take ACIPHEX, but not both. Talk to your doctor about other ways to feed your baby while taking ACIPHEX.

Tell your doctor about all the medicines you take, including prescription and non-prescription medicines, vitamins and herbal supplements. ACIPHEX and certain medicines can affect each other. This can cause serious side effects. Know the medicines that you take. Keep a list of them with you and show it to your doctor when you get a new medicine. Be sure to tell your doctor if you are taking:

- atazanavir (Reyataz)
- cyclosporine (Sandimmune, Neoral)
- digoxin (Lanoxin)
- ketoconazole (Nizoral)
- warfarin (Coumadin)
- antibiotics

How should I take ACIPHEX?

- Take ACIPHEX exactly as prescribed. Your doctor will prescribe the dose that is right for you and your medical condition. Do not change your dose or stop taking ACIPHEX unless you talk to your doctor. Take ACIPHEX for as long as it is prescribed even if you feel better.
- ACIPHEX is usually taken once a day. Your doctor will tell you the time of day to take ACIPHEX, based on your medical condition.
- ACIPHEX can be taken with or without food. Your healthcare provider will tell you whether to take this medicine with or without food based on your medical condition.
- Swallow each ACIPHEX tablet whole with water. **Do not chew, crush, or split ACIPHEX tablets** because this will damage the tablet and the medicine will not work. Tell your doctor if you cannot swallow tablets whole. You may need a different medicine.

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- **If you miss a dose of ACIPHEX, take it as soon as possible. If it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your normal schedule. Do not take 2 doses at the same time.**
- If you take too much ACIPHEX, call your doctor or Poison Control Center right away, or go to the emergency department.
- Your doctor may prescribe antibiotic medicines with ACIPHEX to help treat a stomach infection and heal stomach-area (duodenal) ulcers that are caused by bacteria called *H. pylori*. Make sure you read the patient information that comes with an antibiotic before you start taking it.

What are the possible side effects of ACIPHEX?
ACIPHEX, like other proton pump inhibitors, may cause serious allergic reactions. See the end of this leaflet for a complete list of ingredients in ACIPHEX.

The most common side effects with ACIPHEX may include:
- headache
- pain
- pharyngitis
- flatulence
- infection
- constipation

These are not all the side effects of ACIPHEX. For more information, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

Call your healthcare provider for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

How should I store ACIPHEX?
- Store ACIPHEX in a dry place at room temperature, 59°F to 86°F (15°C to 30°C).
- **Keep ACIPHEX and all medicines out of the reach of children.**

General Information about ACIPHEX
Medicines are sometimes prescribed for conditions other than those described in patient information leaflets. Do not use ACIPHEX for any condition for which it was not prescribed by your doctor. Do not give ACIPHEX to other people, even if they have the same symptoms as you. It may harm them.

This leaflet summarizes the most important information about ACIPHEX. If you would like more information, talk to your doctor. You can also ask your doctor or pharmacist for information about ACIPHEX that is written for healthcare professionals. For full product information, visit the website at http://www.aciphex.com/ or call the toll-free numbers 1-888-4-ACIPHEX or 1-800 JANSSEN.

What are the ingredients in ACIPHEX?
Active Ingredient: rabeprazole sodium

Inactive ingredients of the 20 mg tablet are carnauba wax, crospovidone, diacetylated monoglycerides, ethylcellulose, hydroxypropyl cellulose, hypromellose phthalate, magnesium stearate, mannitol, propylene glycol, sodium hydroxide, sodium stearyl fumarate, talc, and titanium dioxide. Iron oxide yellow is the coloring agent for the tablet coating. Iron oxide red is the ink pigment.

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What is GERD?
Your stomach needs acid to help your body digest food. Stomach acid is made by tiny acid pumps in the cells that line your stomach. If your body makes too much acid or cannot protect itself against a normal amount of acid, medical problems such as GERD can happen.

GERD happens when acid in your stomach backs up into the tube (esophagus) that connects your mouth to your stomach. Stomach acid can damage (erode) the lining of your esophagus. Some symptoms of GERD are heartburn, sour taste in the back of your throat and burping.

For prescription only

Revised January 2009

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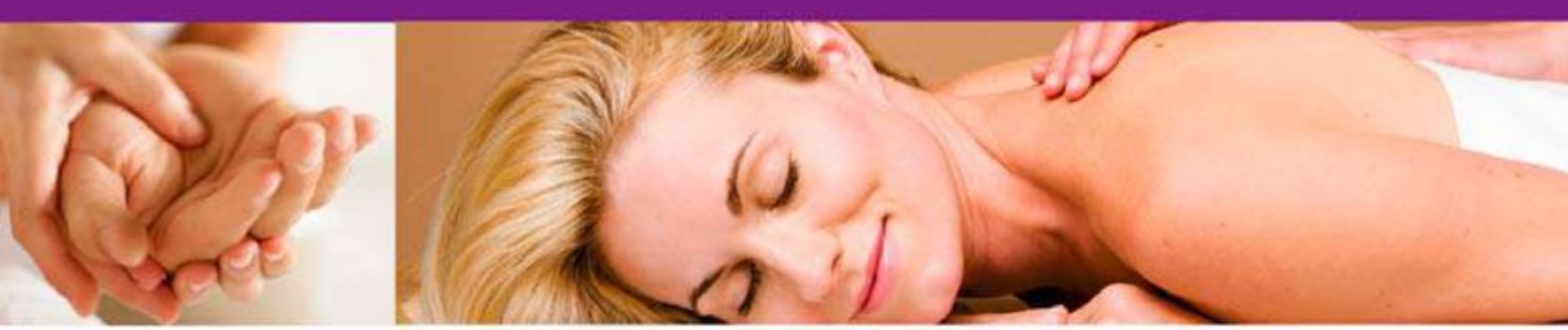

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Advances in Heart Health

There's always news about heart health, but is it news you can use? Here, for heart month, are important findings from the past year that you can act on—and benefit from—now.

TAKE THIS: Fish oil

It requires no prescription, but fish oil packs lots of power. According to a recent review of more than a dozen major studies, if you have high cholesterol, fish oil can lower your odds of cardiovascular problems by nearly 20 percent; if you've had a heart attack, it can cut the likelihood of a second one by 15 to 30 percent. It's the fatty acids EPA and DHA that are key. "All healthy people should

GOOD NEWS: From 1995 to 2005, the death rate from cardiovascular disease fell more than 26 percent.

WENDY ASHTON/RISER/GETTY IMAGES

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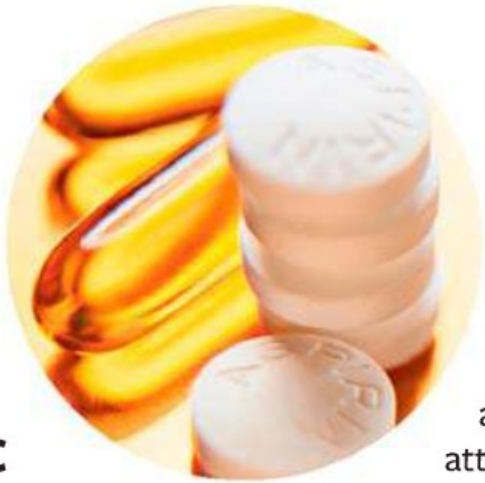
average about 500 milligrams a day of combined EPA and DHA," says study author Carl J. Lavie, MD. "You can get that with two fish meals per week or through a supplement."



PETER ZERAY/PHOTONICA/GETTY IMAGES

TALK TO YOUR DOC BEFORE SWALLOWING THIS: Aspirin

This heart hero helps ward off heart attacks in men and strokes in women, but experts have become more leery of its ability to cause serious stomach bleeding. So the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force has adjusted its guidelines. The important changes: Generally speaking, men shouldn't take aspirin as a preventive before age 45, women should wait until age 55, both should stop at age 79—and no one should start popping the pill without talking to a doctor about potential payoffs versus the danger of bleeding. The task force also recommends a lower dose for prevention: just one low-dose aspirin (81 mg) daily or one regular aspirin (325 mg) every other day.

DO THIS: Meditate

Studies have shown that this stress-taming technique decreases blood pressure and plaque buildup in arteries. Now it seems that meditation actually prevents heart attacks, strokes, and premature death in people with heart problems. Of 201 African Americans with cardiovascular disease, those who learned to meditate using the Transcendental Meditation technique were 47 percent less likely than nonmeditators to have a heart attack or stroke or to die of any cause. "We tend to rush to the pillbox, but our study shows how powerful it can be to add stress reduction," says researcher Theodore Kotchen, MD.

SUPPORT THIS: Smoking Bans

No Smoking signs started cropping up more frequently after the surgeon general endorsed bans on smoking in public places back in 2006. Now the Institute of Medicine reports that heart attack rates have dropped by as much as 47 percent in areas that prohibit lighting up in public. So far, nearly half the states and the District of Columbia have enacted bans.

TREAT THIS: Depression

Sure, it's depressing to have heart disease, but evidence is growing that depression may also be a risk factor. In an investigation of 63,000 women, those who were depressed during the 12-year study were twice as likely to eventually experience sudden cardiac death. That's more reason to get counseling, antidepressants, or both, says cardiologist Sharonne N. Hayes, MD, of the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. Researchers say the mood boosters sertraline and citalopram are least likely to interact with commonly used cardiac medications.

Beth Howard

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Osteoporosis:

Q: My doctor told me I have postmenopausal osteoporosis. But I feel fine and I just assumed I didn't have to be concerned about this.

Dr. Anderson:

Many women don't know they have osteoporosis because it often has no signs or symptoms. But on the inside, your bones can weaken over time, making you vulnerable to fracture. So a diagnosis of osteoporosis is something you really shouldn't ignore.

Q: Is there anything I should be doing?

Dr. A: Treatment can help you avoid fractures and associated complications. Ask your doctor about treatment options like Once-a-Month Actonel. It's clinically proven to help reverse bone loss and can help increase bone strength to help prevent fractures.

Dr. Lori Anderson – Obstetrics & Gynecology
WomenCare PC, Arlington Heights, IL

Doctor paid to appear in this ad.

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Get The Facts

Actonel is a prescription medication to treat postmenopausal osteoporosis.

Important Safety Information for Actonel® (risedronate sodium) tablets. You should not take Actonel if you are allergic to any of the ingredients, if you have low blood calcium (hypocalcemia), have kidneys that work poorly, or cannot stand or sit upright for 30 minutes. Stop taking Actonel and tell your doctor right away if you experience difficult or painful swallowing, chest pain, or severe or continuing heartburn, as these may be signs of serious upper digestive problems. Follow dosing instructions carefully to lower the chance of these events occurring.

Side effects may include stomach pain, upset stomach, or back, muscle, bone or joint pain, sometimes severe. Contact your doctor for medical advice about side effects, or if you have questions about Actonel. Promptly tell your doctor if you develop dental problems, as serious jawbone problems have been reported rarely.

You are encouraged to report side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

Please see the Actonel Patient Information on the adjoining page.

ASK Actonel®
(risedronate sodium) tablets
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Patient Information

ACTONEL® (AK-toh-nel) Tablets
ACTONEL (risedronate sodium) tablets 5 mg,
ACTONEL (risedronate sodium) tablets 35 mg,
ACTONEL (risedronate sodium) tablets 75 mg, and
ACTONEL (risedronate sodium) tablets 150 mg for Osteoporosis

Read this information carefully before you start to use your medicine. Read the information you get every time you get more medicine. There may be new information. This information does not take the place of talking with your healthcare provider about your medical condition or your treatment. If you have any questions or are not sure about something, ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist.

What is the most important information I should know about ACTONEL?

ACTONEL may cause problems in your stomach and esophagus (the tube that connects the mouth and the stomach), such as trouble swallowing (dysphagia), heartburn (esophagitis), and ulcers. You might feel pain in your bones, joints, or muscles (See "What are the possible side effects of ACTONEL?").

You must follow the instructions exactly for ACTONEL to work and to lower the chance of serious side effects. (See "How should I take ACTONEL?").

What is ACTONEL?

ACTONEL is a prescription medicine used:

- to prevent and treat osteoporosis in postmenopausal women.
- to increase bone mass in men with osteoporosis.
- to prevent and treat osteoporosis in men and women that is caused by treatment with steroid medicines such as prednisone.
- to treat Paget's disease of bone in men and women. The treatment for Paget's disease is very different than for osteoporosis and uses a different dose of ACTONEL. This leaflet does not cover using ACTONEL for Paget's disease. If you have Paget's disease, ask your healthcare provider how to use ACTONEL.

ACTONEL may reverse bone loss by stopping more loss of bone and increasing bone strength in most people who take it, even though they won't be able to see or feel a difference. ACTONEL helps lower the risk of breaking bones (fractures). Your healthcare provider may measure the thickness (density) of your bones or do other tests to check your progress.

Who should not take ACTONEL?
Do not take ACTONEL if you:

- have low blood calcium (hypocalcemia)
- cannot sit or stand up for 30 minutes
- have kidneys that work poorly
- have an allergy to ACTONEL. The active ingredient in ACTONEL is risedronate sodium. (See the end of this leaflet for a list of all the ingredients in ACTONEL.)

Tell your doctor before using ACTONEL if:

- you are pregnant or may become pregnant. We do not know if ACTONEL can harm your unborn child.
- you are breast-feeding or plan to breast-feed. We do not know if ACTONEL can pass through your milk and if it can harm your baby.
- you have kidney problems. ACTONEL may not be right for you.

Tell your doctor about all the medicines you take, including prescription and non-prescription medicines, vitamins and herbal supplements.
ACTONEL can interact with other medicines. Keep a list of all the medicines you take. Show it to all your healthcare providers, including your dentist and pharmacist, each time you get a new medicine.

How should I take ACTONEL?
The following instructions apply to all patients taking ACTONEL:

- Take ACTONEL exactly as prescribed by your healthcare provider.
- Take ACTONEL first thing in the morning before you eat or drink anything except plain water.
- Take ACTONEL while you are sitting up or standing.
- Take ACTONEL with 6 to 8 ounces (about 1 cup) of plain water. Do **not** take it with any other drink besides plain water.
- Swallow ACTONEL whole. **Do not chew** the tablet or keep it in your mouth to melt or dissolve.
- After taking ACTONEL you must wait at least 30 minutes
  BEFORE:
  - lying down. You may sit, stand, or do normal activities like read the newspaper or take a walk.
  - eating or drinking anything except plain water.
  - taking vitamins, calcium, or antacids. Take vitamins, calcium, and antacids at a different time of the day from when you take ACTONEL.
- Keep taking ACTONEL for as long as your healthcare provider tells you.
- For ACTONEL to treat your osteoporosis or keep you from getting osteoporosis, you have to take it exactly as prescribed. If you miss a dose of ACTONEL, call your healthcare provider for instructions.
- If you take more than your prescribed dose of ACTONEL, call your healthcare provider right away.
- Your healthcare provider may tell you to take calcium and vitamin D supplements and to exercise.

What is my ACTONEL schedule?

ACTONEL tablets are made in 4 different dosages (amounts). How often you should take your tablet depends upon the dosage that your doctor has prescribed (recommended) for you.

- 5 mg tablets are yellow. One tablet should be taken every day in the morning.

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- 35 mg tablets are orange. One tablet should be taken once a week in the morning.
- 75 mg tablets are pink. One tablet should be taken in the morning two days in a row every month.
- 150 mg tablets are blue. One tablet should be taken once a month in the morning.

If you miss your dose in the morning, do not take it later in the day. You should call your healthcare provider for instructions.

What should I avoid while taking ACTONEL?
- Do not eat or drink anything except water before you take ACTONEL and for at least 30 minutes after you take it. See "How should I take ACTONEL?".
- Do not lie down for at least 30 minutes after you take ACTONEL.
- Foods and some vitamin supplements and medicines can stop your body from absorbing (using) ACTONEL. Therefore, do not take anything other than plain water at or near the time you take ACTONEL.

What are the possible side effects of ACTONEL?
Stop taking ACTONEL and tell your healthcare provider right away if:
- swallowing is difficult or painful
- you have chest pain
- you have very bad heartburn or it doesn't get better

Possible serious side effects may include:
- esophagus or stomach problems, including ulcers, pain, or trouble swallowing. Tell your healthcare provider if you have pain or discomfort in your stomach or esophagus.
- low calcium and other mineral disturbances. If you already have one (or more) of these problems, it should be corrected before taking ACTONEL.
- pain in bones, joints or muscles, sometimes severe. Pain may start as soon as one day or up to several months after starting ACTONEL.
- jawbone problems in some people, which may include infection and slower healing after teeth are pulled. Tell your healthcare providers, including your dentist, right away if you have these symptoms.

Common side effects include the following:
- back and joint pain
- upset stomach and abdominal (stomach area) pain
- short-lasting, mild flu-like symptoms, which are reported with the monthly doses and usually get better after the first dose.

Other possible side effects may include:
- **Allergic and severe skin reactions.** Tell your healthcare provider if you develop any symptoms of an allergic reaction including: rash (with or without blisters), hives, or swelling of the face, lips, tongue, or throat. **Get medical help right away if you have trouble breathing or swallowing.**
- **Eye inflammation.** Tell your healthcare provider if you get any eye pain, redness, or if your eyes become more sensitive to light.

Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

How should I store ACTONEL?
- Store ACTONEL between 68°F to 77°F (20°C to 25°C).
- **Keep ACTONEL and all medicines out of the reach of children.**

General information about ACTONEL:

Medicines are sometimes prescribed for conditions that are not mentioned in patient information leaflets. Do not use ACTONEL for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not give ACTONEL to other people, even if they have the same symptoms you have. It may harm them.

What if I have other questions about ACTONEL?
This leaflet summarizes the most important information about ACTONEL for osteoporosis. If you have more questions about ACTONEL, ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist. They can give you information written for healthcare professionals. For more information, call 1-877-ACTONEL (toll-free) or visit our web site at www.ACTONEL.com.

What are the ingredients of ACTONEL?
ACTONEL (active ingredient): risedronate sodium.
ACTONEL (inactive ingredients):
All dose strengths contain: crospovidone, hydroxypropyl cellulose, hypromellose, magnesium stearate, microcrystalline cellulose, polyethylene glycol, silicon dioxide, titanium dioxide.

Dose-strength specific ingredients include:
5 mg—ferric oxide yellow, lactose monohydrate;
30 mg—lactose monohydrate; 35 mg—ferric oxide red, ferric oxide yellow, lactose monohydrate;
75 mg—ferric oxide red; 150 mg—FD&C blue #2 aluminum lake.

ACTONEL® is marketed by:
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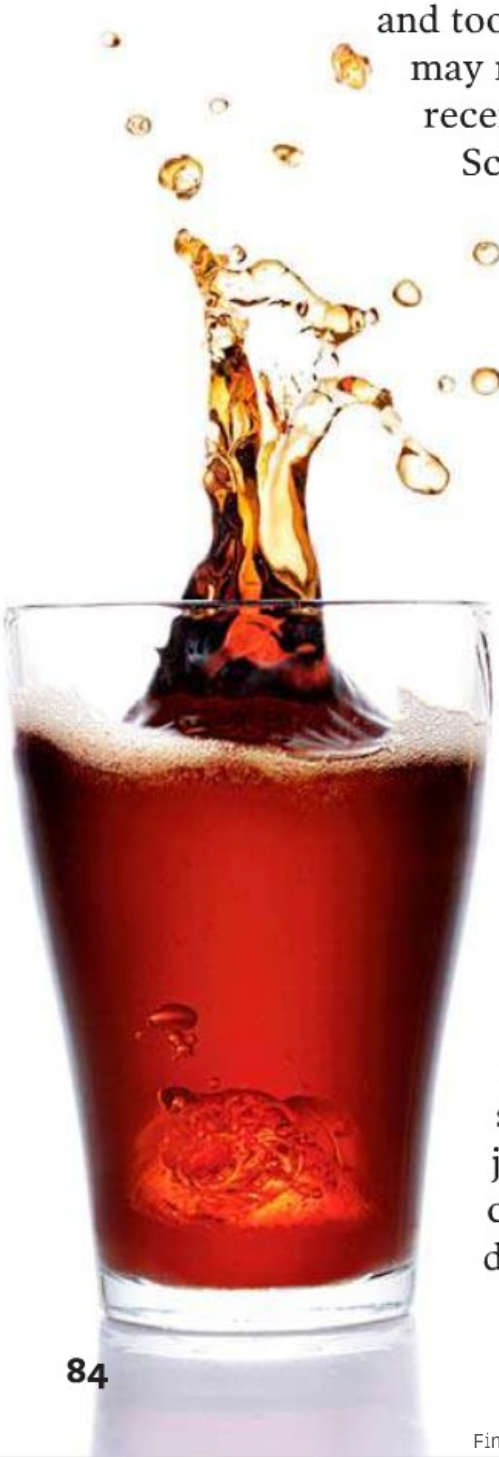
Can Your Soda Habit

Knock back a few soft drinks and you may kick up your blood pressure. According to a new study, adults who consumed more than 74 grams of fructose per day—the amount in two and a half sodas—increased their likelihood of developing high blood pressure by 36 percent. That's in addition to a bloated risk of obesity, diabetes, and tooth decay. And diet soda may not be any safer. In a recent Harvard Medical School study, women who drank two or more servings of artificially sweetened soda daily were found to have double the risk of kidney function decline, which can destroy that organ.



For all soft drinks, the devil's in the dose, so make soda a special treat, or at least practice portion control. Soda fans, take note: New mini-cans of Coca-Cola, Sprite, Fanta Orange, and Barq's root beer (available now in select markets) contain just 7.5 ounces. They can help—if, that is, you drink only one.

Janis Graham

The Symptom Checker

Should I worry about ridges in my fingernails?

Not if the ridges are vertical—those often appear as you get older, though no one is sure why. (Moisturizing nails may make the ridges less obvious.) Horizontal ridges can signal trouble, though. Called Beau's lines, these mean the nail-making process got interrupted, which can happen during a high fever or if you develop an illness like diabetes. Also talk to your doctor if you see signs of "clubbing," in which the tips of fingers enlarge and nails curve downward. That can be a sign of heart or lung problems. *B. H.*

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A Delicious Way to Dial Back Diabetes

If you're diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, your doctor will almost certainly tell you that you need to lose some weight. Now research identifies the best way to do it: Eat the Mediterranean way. In the study, 215 overweight people with diabetes followed either a classic, low-fat regimen (based on American Heart Association guidelines) or a higher-fat, Mediterranean-style diet (lots of olive oil, as well as vegetables, whole grains, and fish and poultry). After four years, both groups had lost similar amounts of weight—but only 44 percent of the Mediterranean-style eaters needed diabetes drugs, compared with 70 percent of the low-fat dieters.

The benefits come partly because a Mediterranean diet is full of healthy foods and partly because it doesn't rely on fat-reduced foods high in refined carbs, says Dariush Mozaffarian, MD, an assistant professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School. To help your blood sugar:

EAT LESS OF THESE	AND MORE OF THESE
Beef, lamb, pork	Fish, poultry, beans
Butter, margarine, butter substitute	Extra-virgin olive oil or other vegetable oils such as soybean and canola
Low-fat crackers, chips	Walnuts or other nuts, sunflower and pumpkin seeds, olives
Reduced-fat cookies	Fresh fruit
Egg substitute; fat-free yogurt; reduced-fat American, Cheddar, and Swiss cheese	Whole eggs; whole yogurt; feta, Parmesan, or goat cheese
Baked potatoes, bread, rice	Roasted or sautéed vegetables tossed with herbs and drizzled with olive oil

J. G.

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A heart-to-heart talk about the benefits of PSYLLIUM fiber

Studies show that daily consumption of psyllium fiber may help reduce the risk of heart disease.*

WHAT IS PSYLLIUM? Psyllium fiber is derived from the husk, which is the outside covering of the seed of the plantago ovata plant, a grain native to Asia, the Mediterranean, and North America.

HOW DOES PSYLLIUM WORK? Psyllium fiber gelling action traps to help remove waste and some cholesterol.*

HOW DOES PSYLLIUM HELP MY HEART? Diets low in saturated fat and cholesterol that include 7 grams of soluble fiber per day from psyllium husk, as in Metamucil, may reduce the risk of heart disease by lowering cholesterol.*

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO? Talk to your doctor now to understand how Metamucil, along with lifestyle changes such as exercise and a low-fat, low-cholesterol diet, may help reduce your risk of heart disease by lowering cholesterol.

Ask More of Your FIBER

Use as directed

*Diets low in saturated fat and cholesterol that include 7 grams of soluble fiber per day from psyllium husk may reduce the risk of heart disease by lowering cholesterol. One serving of Metamucil psyllium powder or capsules has at least 2.1 grams of this soluble fiber. Use as directed.

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Coffee's New Perks

Enjoy your morning brew—it may provide a hedge against cancer. A new study of 60,000 women shows that those who drank four or more cups of coffee a day cut their risk for endometrial cancer by 25 percent, compared with those who had a cup or less. (Risk fell by 46 percent for obese women, who are most prone to developing the disease.) Men may benefit too: Other recent research suggests a 60 percent drop in the risk of developing aggressive prostate cancer among those who drink six or more cups of coffee daily, compared with men who don't have any. *B. H.*

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Strong Suit

You need to pound your bones to make your skeleton strong. But if the mere idea of jogging or jumping rope makes you hyperventilate, try walking instead—in a weighted vest. A new quilted vest from NYKNYC makes it easy even when the temperature drops; flat steel weights (up to nine pounds total) slip into vest pockets to give your bones a boost. A five-year study from Oregon State University found that women who exercised while wearing a weighted vest increased bone density by 1.5 percent in a fracture-prone area of the hip, while active women who didn't wear weights lost 4.4 percent of bone mass at that spot during the same time.

The vest is available in men's and women's sizes and in three colors (red, green, and black) for $75. To order, go to nyknyc.com or call 845-688-7612. *B. H.*

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Obesity has gone global. Our poll reveals the world's riskiest habits, crankiest spouses, dumbest excuses—and best ways to send the pounds packing.

THE WEIGHT OF THE WORLD

BY JOE KITA

READER'S DIGEST GLOBAL POLL

Remember those heart-tugging TV commercials in which Sally Struthers implored us to help fight world hunger? Well, we reached a strange tipping point recently. According to an October report from the World Health Organization (WHO), more people worldwide now die from being overweight and obese than from being underweight. Although world hunger remains a significant problem, it's our appetite for prosperity and all its spoils that's more likely to kill us now.

According to WHO, there are approximately 1.6 billion overweight or obese people in the world; at least 2.5 million deaths are attributable to these conditions annually. Nearly 18 million children under age five are estimated to be overweight. How long do you think it will be before some celebrity appears on our TV screens showing pictures of plump toddlers and beseeching us to help them fight fat?

To understand what's happening and to bring us closer to a possible solution, *Reader's Digest* commissioned a global diet poll, interviewing

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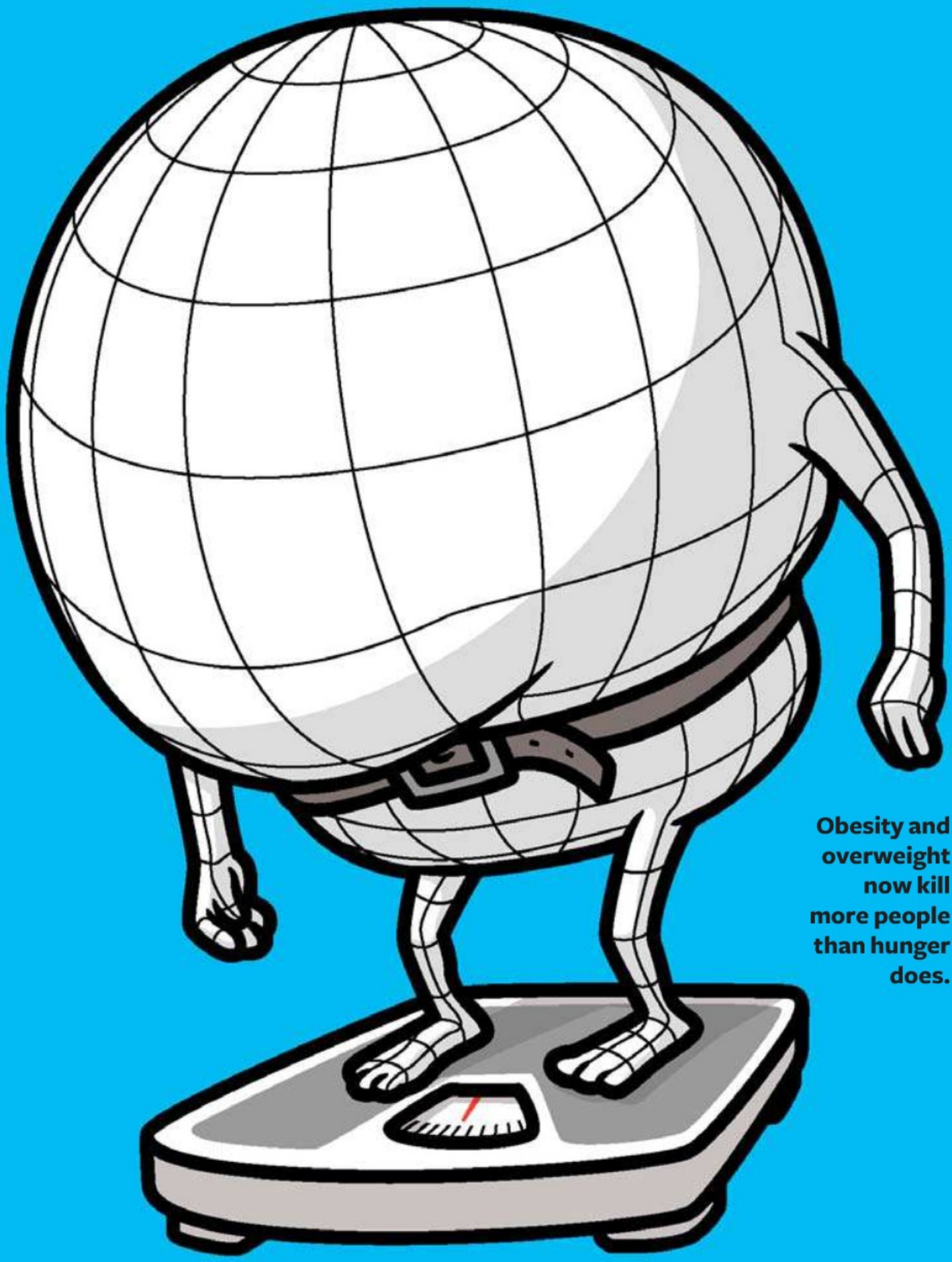

Obesity and overweight now kill more people than hunger does.

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approximately 16,000 people in 16 countries about their attitudes and behaviors regarding weight. Our statistical tour reveals the country where being fat is no big deal and the spot where thin is the most in. It makes clear which nation blames America for this obesity epidemic and which points the finger at itself. It shows who's dieting, who's doing surgery, and who's positively reckless in paring the pounds. Come with us as we explore how people around the world view obesity—and what they're doing about it.

The Country Most Aware of the Dangers of Obesity

FINLAND

In the 1970s, Finland had the world's highest incidence of deaths from heart disease. Not anymore. A public health campaign to educate people about diet, exercise, and the dangers of smoking helped slash heart disease deaths in the working-age population by 80 percent over the past three decades and added nearly ten years to the average Finn's life.

One of the keys to the turnaround, says Pekka Puska, MD, director general of the National Institute for Health and Welfare in Helsinki, was community-based incentives such as "Quit and Win" challenges. Towns actually competed for prizes based on how many people stopped smoking or cut their cholesterol—or shaved a few inches off their midsection. Our survey found that 83 percent of Finns have attempted to lose weight at some point, a figure that's at least 10 percentage points higher than in any other country we polled.

How the U.S. compares: Seventy-two percent of Americans have tried to

WHO'S TRYING TO LOSE

In half of the countries we surveyed, most people have tried to lose weight at least once. Around the world, women are significantly more likely than men to have tried to reduce.

	%
FINLAND	83
NETHERLANDS	73
AUSTRALIA	72
U.S.	72
BRAZIL	71
CANADA	71
SWITZERLAND	71
U.K.	64

	%
MEXICO	46
GERMANY	44
FRANCE	40
PHILIPPINES	38
CHINA	36
RUSSIA	33
HUN[1]	24
INDIA	21

[1]HUNGARY

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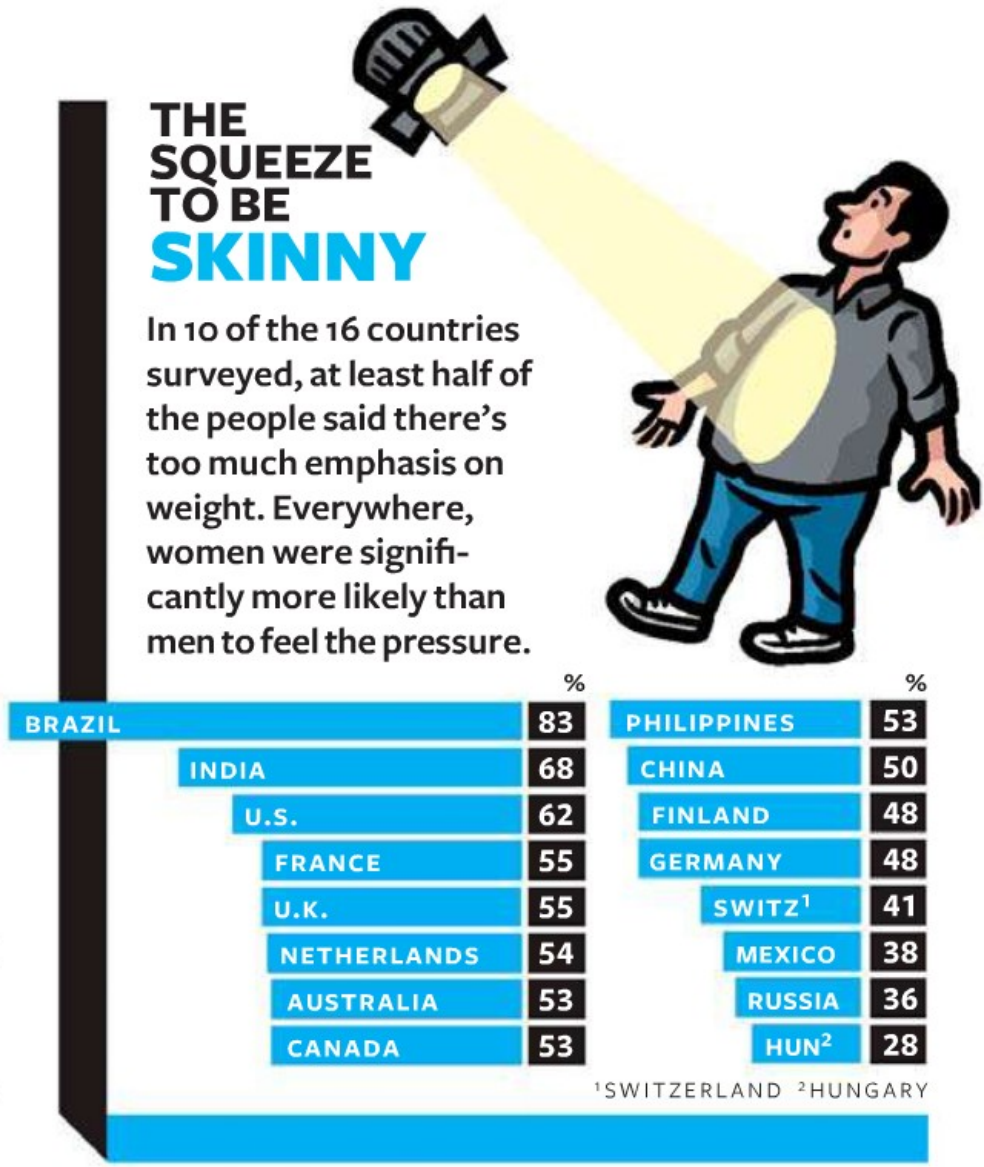
lose weight, predominantly for health reasons. Not surprisingly, women are much more likely to have done so than men—85 percent versus 59 percent.

The Country That Feels the Most Pressure to Be Thin

BRAZIL

In Rio, where people are expected to wear as few clothes as possible to Carnaval or at the beach, there is a genuine cult of the body. The need to be inspection-ready is a burden: Our survey found that 83 percent of Brazilians think there's too much emphasis placed on weight, with men (77 percent) and women (89 percent) both feeling the pressure. Maybe that explains a few other national trends: The percentage of the population taking diet pills doubled between 2001 and 2005, plastic surgery is booming, and doctors even offer toe liposuction (to create more "toe cleavage").

How the U.S. compares: Sixty-two percent of Americans say we pay entirely too much attention to weight. The United States ranks third in this category, behind Brazil and India (68 percent).



The Country Where Wives Most Want Their Husbands to Lose Weight

UNITED STATES

More than half (51 percent) of married American women wish their husbands were thinner. Conversely, 47 percent of married American men desire the same of their mates. The irony: A full 68 percent of women said our culture is overly focused on weight. Evidently, they're more accepting of a belly if it's not hanging off their hubby.

The Country Where Husbands Most Want Their Wives to Lose Weight

INDIA

Forty-eight percent of Indian men admit to being dissatisfied with the shape of their spouse, while 46 percent of Indian women say the same. On the bright side, everyone seems equally unhappy.

How the U.S. compares: American men come in right behind their Indian counterparts—47 percent wish for just a little less of their wives.

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The Country Where You're Loved Just the Way You Are

HUNGARY

Not only are Hungarians the least likely to feel like their poundage is being eyed with public disapproval—a paltry 28 percent said their country's emphasis on weight was too great—married folk are more apt to be content with the shape of their spouse. Only 11 percent of Hungarian men and 14 percent of women want their mates to get their ladle out of the goulash pot.

The Country That Swallows the Most Diet Pills

CHINA

Thirty-seven percent of the Chinese admit to taking weight-loss pills. Experts say that body consciousness is growing throughout China, and diet pills are seen as a quick and trendy way to achieve the ideal. But these pills can be dangerous—even deadly—because their manufacture is unregulated.

In our survey, women in nearly every country were more inclined than men to report trying a weight-loss aid. (In China, the split is 48-18 percent.) Also quick to turn to pills were Brazil (30 percent of survey respondents), Russia (24 percent), and Mexico (23 percent).

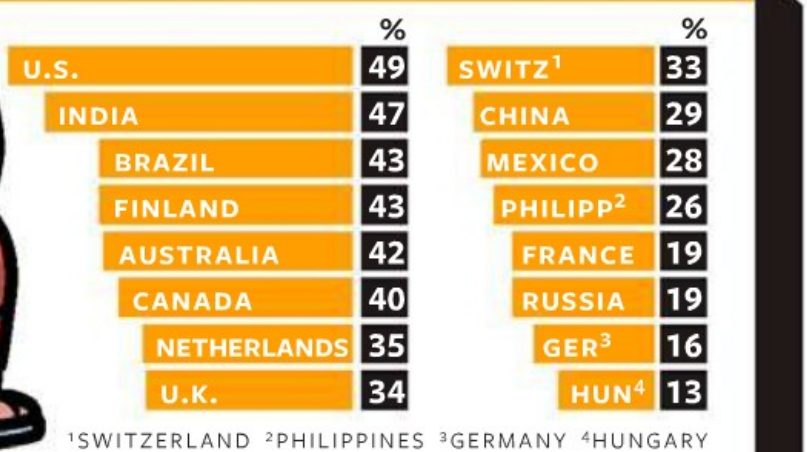
How the U.S. compares: Nineteen percent of Americans have popped diet pills. That includes 23 percent of women and 14 percent of men.

The Country in Which People Are Most Likely to Ignore Their Doctor

SWITZERLAND

When we asked people around the world for the reasons they've tried to lose weight, doctor's orders were not high on the list. The Swiss gave their physician's urging the least credence of anyone (just 11 percent cited that as a motivation). Mexicans (46 percent) and the French (39 percent) were most attentive.

How the U.S. compares: Twenty-nine percent of Americans say that their doctor helped convince them to lighten up, with more men (33 percent)



One third to nearly half of the people in the majority of countries surveyed admitted they wanted their spouse to lose weight. (They admitted that to us, however, not necessarily to their spouse.) This is one area where the sexes don't seem to differ: About as many women as men were critical of the girth of their mate.

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than women (27 percent) paying attention to the advice.

The Country Where They're Still Trying to Puff Off the Pounds

RUSSIA

Smoking to suppress appetite is recognized as a foolish trade-off throughout the world, but the habit persists anyway, particularly in the Philippines, China, Mexico, and, strikingly, Russia. Twenty-three percent of Russian men and 18 percent of women admit to smoking cigarettes in order to lose weight.

How the U.S. compares: Just 5 percent of Americans say they smoke for weight loss.

The Country Most Likely to Blame a Lack of Willpower

THE PHILIPPINES

You have to commend their honesty: A full 95 percent of Filipinos say they enjoy good food, and 82 percent admit to simply not having the willpower to resist it. Indeed, only 38 percent have even tried to lose weight.

How the U.S. compares: Almost half of Americans say food is just plain irresistible. But we're more apt to blame our weight on lack of exercise (84 percent).

JUNIOR, YOU'RE FAT TOO

Although childhood obesity is a growing global concern, the parents we surveyed weren't very likely to say their school-age children needed to lose weight. (Mothers and fathers were about equally unconcerned.) Compare these findings with the graph on page 96: In a number of countries where people are relatively unlikely to have tried to lose weight themselves (such as India, Russia, and China), they're eager to see their kids shape up. What's the old adage? "Do as I say, not as I do?"

The Country Most Likely to Blame the Parents

RUSSIA

An amazing 70 percent of Russians point to their genes as a major reason they need bigger jeans. Germans (61 percent) and Indians (50 percent) also use this excuse.

How the U.S. compares: Twenty percent of Americans blame Mom and Dad.

The Country Most Likely to Blame Americans

FRANCE

Should we be surprised? Probably not, given that French fries–freedom fries exchange a few years ago. More than any other country surveyed, France points to America's eating habits and fast food as

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prime culprits in its growing girth.

How the U.S. compares: At least we take responsibility for the effects of our fast-food habit. Almost three quarters of Americans say our way of eating promotes obesity.

The Country with the Highest Weight Loss IQ

MEXICO

Almost all Mexicans—93 percent of them—report switching to more healthful food in an attempt to lose their belly. Eighty-six percent have also tried to become more physically active. More than any other country surveyed, Mexico knows the sensible approach to weight loss—even if its citizens don't always put that knowledge into practice. About 70 percent of Mexican adults are overweight or obese, according to that country's National Institute for Public Health.

How the U.S. compares: Eighty-six percent of Americans have tried eating more healthfully, and 75 percent have attempted to work out. But 61 percent (versus 55 percent of Mexicans) still resort to dietary deprivation, which studies show has a dismal success rate over the long haul.

The Country Where Pounds Are Most Likely to Get in the Way of Promotions

INDIA

Sixty-seven percent of Indians say that being overweight can "seriously interfere" with career advancement. That's at least ten points higher than in any other nation surveyed. In fact, 41 percent of dieters there say they were motivated by a desire to be promotable. And this is one of the few instances where men (52 percent) feel greater pressure to trim down than women (31 percent). The notion that excess pounds can leave you wedged into a dead end in the office is also pervasive in Germany and the Philippines.

How the U.S. compares: Forty-one percent of Americans think being overweight can sink a career—but only 4 percent of us admit to dieting to impress the boss.

The Country Where Overweight Women Struggle Most

UNITED STATES

In most countries, people agree that it's just plain tough to be overweight, whether you're male or female, but there were a couple of striking exceptions. Fifty-seven percent of people in China say that being well-padded poses no particular problems for either sex. And in the United States, respondents say that being overweight is harder on women. Almost half of Americans (58 percent of women and 37 percent of men) voiced this opinion.

The Countries Where Being Fat Interferes Most with Your Sex Life

(TIE) AUSTRALIA AND MEXICO

The majority (52 percent) of people in both of these nations say being fat holds them back from having a good time in the sack. Russia came in close behind, with 51 percent agreeing. Interestingly, Hungarians (15 percent) and the Dutch (18 percent) are least likely to say size makes a difference to their sex lives.

In every country, men were more likely than women to predict amorous woes, with men in Australia, China, and Mexico most inclined to say that pounds created problems in this regard.

How the U.S. compares: Forty-six percent of Americans (51 percent of men and 41 percent of women) say excess heftiness gets in the way of frolicking.

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WEIGHT LOSS SECRETS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

BY JOE KITA

As the *Reader's Digest* global poll shows, people around the world are struggling with their weight. But that's not to say that obesity is our collective destiny. In fact, just about every culture has some custom that can keep people lean—habits that can form the basis of a potent international weight-loss plan. For example, if you dine out in Europe, a waiter generally sets a bottle of mineral water on your table. You have to request water in many U.S. restaurants, and as a result, people often opt for soda or other beverages that add calories. Just ordering mineral water with your meal—or requesting water from the tap—can make a big difference to your waistline over time. We've collected ingenious tips like this from 18 countries, asking leading nutritionists and *Reader's Digest*'s own international editors to divulge the quirks of their cultures that can help us all. Consider it a world weight-loss tour you don't need tickets for. Ready to send your belly packing?

SPICE IT UP

THAILAND

Thai food is among the spiciest in the world. Hot peppers raise your metabolism, but the real benefit of food with a little zing is that it slows your eating, says James Hill, PhD, past president of the American Society for Nutrition. "Americans eat too fast," he says. "By the time your body signals that it's full, you've overeaten. Eating slower is a good weight-loss strategy, and making food spicier is an easy way to do it."

ILLUSTRATED BY CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

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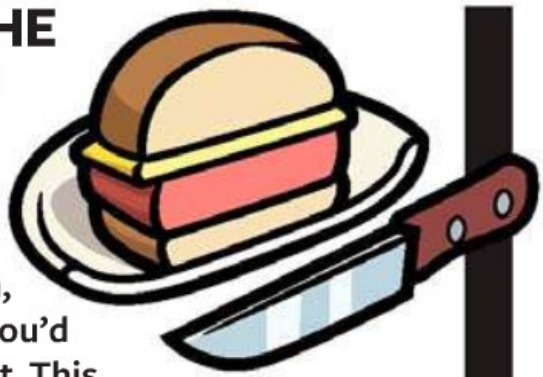
DOWNSIZE THE SUPERSIZING

UNITED KINGDOM



If you walk into a McDonald's in London, the clerk won't ask if you'd like to "supersize" that. This option was discontinued in the U.K. after it accounted for less than 0.1 percent of sales. The Brits prefer smaller portions—perhaps a lingering vestige of the frugality instilled by World War II rationing, says Simon Hartley, executive editor of *Reader's Digest U.K.*

In the United States, McDonald's has backed off supersizing too. But a large Coke here still contains 100 calories more than one in the U.K., and there's no such thing as a Double Quarter Pounder with Cheese in Great Britain. Take the hint: Who really needs to eat a half-pound of meat at a sitting?

Serve a side of rice and beans

BRAZIL

All that shaking at Carnaval isn't the only body-friendly habit in Rio; Brazilians stay slim by enjoying this traditional dish with just about every meal, says Sérgio Charlab, editor of *Reader's Digest Brazil*. A study in the journal *Obesity Research* found that a diet consisting primarily of rice and beans lowers the risk of becoming overweight by about 14 percent when compared with typical Western fare. That's because it's lower in fat and higher in fiber, which is thought to stabilize blood sugar levels. It may be counterintuitive, but a diet full of beans equals a beach-ready body.

Try fasting once in a while

INDONESIA

Islam, this country's leading religion, encourages periodic fasting—no food or drink from dawn to dusk. Others in Indonesia practice *mutih*, which allows only water and white rice. Although experts don't recommend fasting for weight control, fasting in moderation can break patterns of mindless eating, says Hill, of the American Society for Nutrition. "Most Americans never get hungry," he points out. "We've eaten the next meal before we've entirely digested the last one." No need for strict abstinence to get these psychological benefits—try just cutting your calories in half for a day.

Eat at home more often than you eat out

POLAND

Poles typically spend only 5 percent of their family budget on eating out. According to U.S. Department of Agriculture statistics, the average American family spends 37 percent of its food dollars at restaurants and fast-food joints. To save money and pounds, start tracking how often you eat out and how much you spend each month, and gradually cut back. "People who don't cook at home tend to eat less healthy food and be heavier than people who do," says journalist and activist Michael Pollan. "In fact, the collapse of cooking in a society tracks very closely its rise in obesity."

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Eat your breakfast
GERMANY

An impressive 75 percent of Germans eat breakfast daily (compared with just 44 percent of Americans). They're not grabbing Egg McMuffins either; they're sitting down to fruit and whole-grain cereals and breads. Nutritionists have been advising people not to skip breakfast for years, but recent studies give a better picture of its importance. In one, British researchers discovered that if you haven't eaten breakfast, your brain's reward center will light up more vividly when you see a high-calorie food—making you more likely to indulge. Finally: a scientific explanation for that irresistible urge to pull into Dunkin' Donuts.

Swap the gas pedal for the bike pedal
NETHERLANDS

Bikes (18 million) outnumber people (16.5 million) in the Netherlands. But unlike Americans—most of whose two-wheelers languish in basements and garages—54 percent of Dutch bike owners use them for daily activities, such as shopping and traveling to work. The average Dutchman pedals 541 miles per year. Traffic lights in parts of Amsterdam are even synchronized to bike speed. Bike-to-Work Day in the United States is Friday, May 21—try using your bike to commute that day or just for errands close to home. If you're of average size and pedaling at a moderate pace, you can burn around 550 calories per hour.

Try a bowl of muesli
SWITZERLAND

Muesli is a porridge or cereal made from oats, fruit, and nuts, each of which has been linked to better health and weight control. It was developed by a Swiss physician more than a hundred years ago to nourish hospital patients, but the Swiss eat it for breakfast or as a light evening dish. Muesli's fiber makes it slow to digest, keeping you feeling full longer. Read the label carefully, though: Sugar content can vary from 2 to 14 grams per serving.

Carve out a dacha plot
RUSSIA

Country houses, or dachas, where 51 percent of city folk spend vacations and summer weekends, almost always feature a garden. Russians grow their own vegetables and

SIT LONG, TALK LOTS
FRANCE

The French excel at the leisurely family meal. On average, 92 percent of French families dine together nightly, compared with 28 percent of American families. "For the French, eating is the event of the day," says Fred Pescatore, MD, president of the International & American Associations of Clinical Nutritionists. "For us, it's something we do before heading out to do something else." Lengthy meals actually encourage less eating, Dr. Pescatore says: Conversation slows down the fork and gives you time to realize you're full.

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fruits and preserve and can what they grow. That makes their diet more nutritious. And "there's not much you can grow in a garden that will make you fat," notes Hill.

Turn up the turmeric
MALAYSIA

This spice, a key ingredient in curries, grows wild in Malaysian jungles. One of its chief components is a substance called curcumin, which may turn out to be a potent fat fighter. A recent Tufts University study found that mice fed a high-fat diet with small amounts of curcumin gained less weight than did other mice given similar but curcumin-free meals. Researchers think the ingredient suppresses the growth of fat tissue and increases fat-burning. Try some in your next stir-fry.

Sip some rooibos tea
SOUTH AFRICA

Enjoyed throughout the country, rooibos tea is more robust than green tea, and because it's naturally sweet, it needs no sugar. Ditching your daily Frappuccino for a cup of rooibos—Starbucks now sells it—could save you thousands of calories per month. "Tea-drinking cultures generally have lower rates of obesity," says Dr. Pescatore. "That may be from special compounds, such as catechins, that certain teas contain, or it may simply be that we often think we're hungry when we're really dehydrated."

TAKE UP NORDIC WALKING
FINLAND

This is one of the Finns' favorite outdoor activities. It's not as exotic as it sounds: All that's required is a pair of inexpensive, lightweight walking poles. Holding these in your hands aids balance, which is great if you're older or if you're on slippery terrain. Even better: Because they make you use muscles in your shoulders, arms, and torso, the poles transform walking into a total-body workout that burns 20 percent more calories, according to a study at the Cooper Institute in Dallas. Winter or summer, it's a simple way to derive more fat-reducing benefit from your regular walk.

Crunch more pickles
HUNGARY

Hungarians like things pickled—not just cucumbers but bell peppers, cabbage, and tomatoes. These tart treats can help keep you thin, probably because of the vinegar that pickles them. Growing evidence suggests that acetic acid, the main component of vinegar, helps reduce blood pressure, blood sugar levels, and the formation of fat. Pickles aren't your thing? Swap your ranch salad dressing for oil and vinegar.

Take a Sunday family tour
NORWAY

It's a deeply rooted Norwegian habit: On Sunday, everyone from toddlers to grandparents heads out

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SWALLOW MORE HERRING

NETHERLANDS

The Dutch down about 85 million of these slippery fish per year—raw. That's about five for every person in the country (and five more than eaten here). They're pickled, then served unadorned as snacks or in soft buns with onions and gherkins for lunch.

Oily fish like herring is slimming for a few reasons, says Dr. Pescatore, author of *The Hamptons Diet*. It contains lots of omega-3 fatty acids, which reduce levels of the stress hormone cortisol—and cortisol is known to increase the amount of fat deposited around your middle. What's more, lunching on herring or canned sardines guarantees you'll ingest far fewer calories than you would if you eat a burger or even fish sticks. Just don't forget the breath mints.

to hike (in summer) or cross-country ski (in winter). Compare that with the typical American household, where the only Sunday expedition is from the fridge to the football game on TV. Start a Nordic tradition in your house. At halftime, shoo everyone outdoors for a walk around the neighborhood.

Get yourself all twisted up

INDIA

Most Americans respect yoga's stress-busting and flexibility-enhancing power, but not many realize it facilitates weight loss. In fact, a recent study found that yoga devotees have a lower body mass index (BMI) than other exercisers do. There are probably multiple reasons. Yoga is best done on an empty stomach and can build muscle (depending on your preferred poses), which boosts your metabolism. And it encourages mindfulness, which includes paying attention to whether you feel full.

Perfect the power nap

JAPAN

In this on-the-go country, many people take time for a daily 20- to 30-minute nap, says James Maas, PhD, a sleep researcher at Cornell University and the author of *Power Sleep*. There's increasing evidence that chronic sleep deprivation raises the risk of weight gain. Maas blames two hormones: leptin, which helps the brain sense when you're full, and ghrelin, which triggers hunger. The less sleep you get, the lower your leptin levels—and the higher your ghrelin. "Many people think they're hungry when they're actually sleepy," Maas says. "Instead of a snack, they need some shut-eye."

Make the midday meal the biggest

MEXICO

Instead of ingesting the bulk of the day's calories in the evening, as most Americans do, Mexicans traditionally eat their biggest meal between 2 and 4 p.m. If you eat less at night, you'll wake up hungrier and eat a bigger breakfast, which facilitates weight control. As a general fat-fighting rule, try to get the bulk of your daily calories at breakfast and lunch. ■

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Joe Butler ascends an ice wall in Alaska's Chugach Mountains.

OFF A CLIFF!

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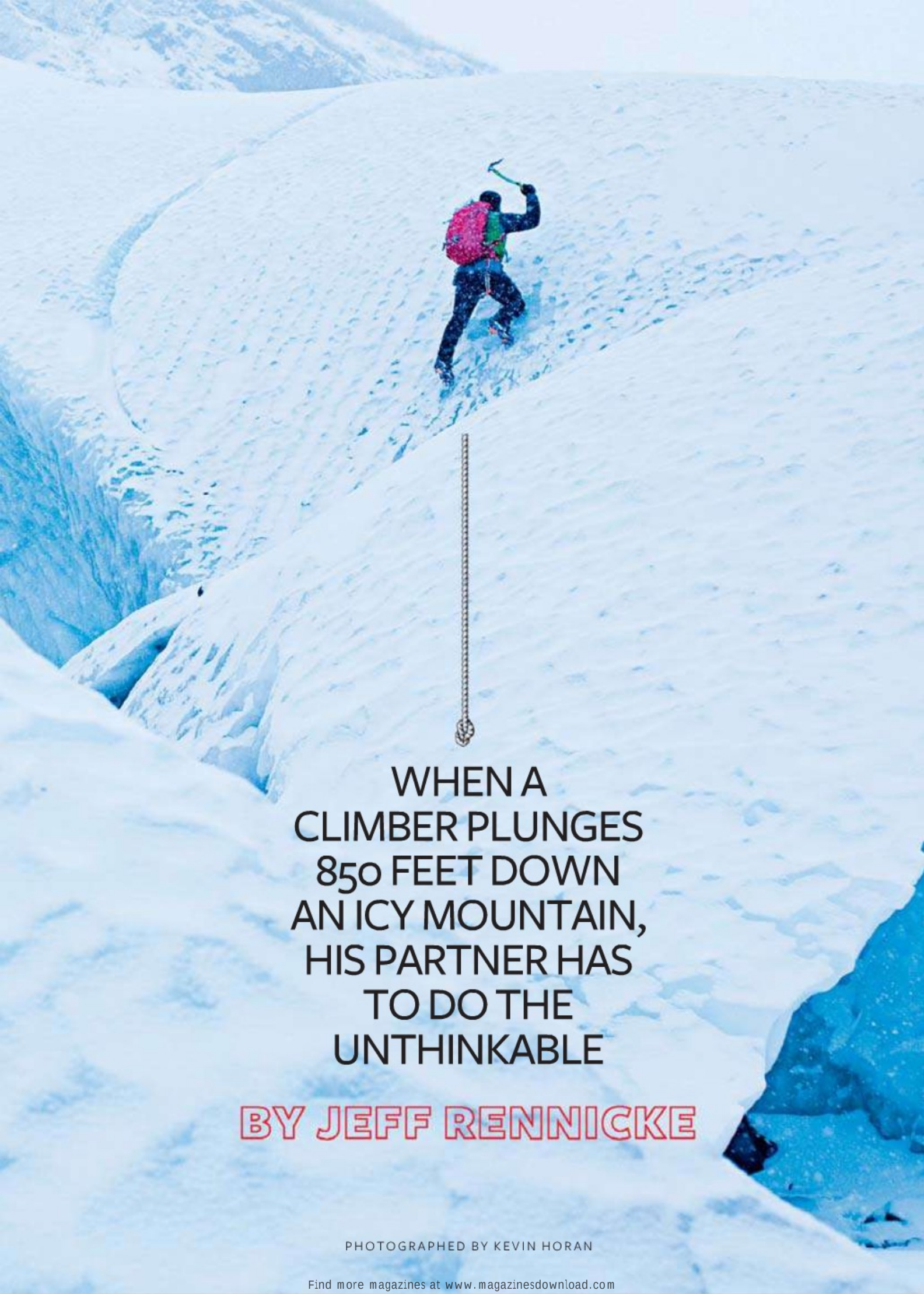

WHEN A CLIMBER PLUNGES 850 FEET DOWN AN ICY MOUNTAIN, HIS PARTNER HAS TO DO THE UNTHINKABLE

BY JEFF RENNICKE

PHOTOGRAPHED BY KEVIN HORAN

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Butler (right) and partner Greg Nappi walk up the toe of a glacier, a jumble of snow, ice, and rock.

It was faint but unmistakable, a voice barely audible in the distance. At close to 2,500 feet on the northeast face of Bellicose Peak, 15 miles into Alaska's Chugach Mountains, climber Greg Nappi listened. He had expected his climbing partner, Joe Butler, to appear at any moment atop the 150-foot wall of ice just below and join him on the push for the summit. But Butler had not appeared, and now Nappi heard a faraway call for help.

Many times in the past six years, Nappi and Butler had been roped together on steep rock faces from Alaska to Argentina, their lives in each other's hands, a deep trust building between them. They knew each other's strengths and fears, personalities and patterns. Butler was usually quiet on the mountain, calm and steady. So when Nappi heard the shouting a second time, he knew something was really wrong.

"I could tell it was Joe, but it was coming from farther away than I was expecting," Nappi recalls. He strained to make out what Butler was shouting.

"Nappi," he thought he heard. And then, clearly: "I think I broke my leg."

Alaska is a landscape packed with rock and ice. Twelve of the highest mountains in the United States jut like exclamation points into the sky, and more than 50,000 glaciers, some larger than Rhode Island, glisten like huge jewels.

Butler, 29, and Nappi, 25, had both grown up in the East—Butler in Georgia, Nappi in Pennsylvania—but during their college years, Alaska beckoned. They met when they both landed summer jobs guiding tourists on the Matanuska Glacier, and it wasn't long before they began climbing together. They had much in common, but there were differences too. Butler was the better ice climber,

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Nappi better on rock, Butler's methodical rhythm balancing Nappi's enthusiasm. "We meshed as a team," says Nappi.

Last April, they planned two weeks of climbing in the maze of peaks surrounding the Eklutna Glacier in Chugach State Park, a half-million-acre expanse outside Anchorage. With thousands of feet of vertical rock and ice, it was, as Butler says, "a good place to get lost in." A bonus was Serenity Falls Hut, a backcountry shelter at the end of a 13-mile ski trail.

If Butler didn't swing his ax into the ice, he had no chance. But there wasn't time. He shot over the edge, out of control.

"We could climb all day and camp there at night," Butler says. "It was perfect."

Four days into their expedition, Butler and Nappi set out for Bellicose Peak. They left the hut around 6:30 a.m. and worked their way up a tight canyon to the toe of the glacier. There they turned west and began a 1,000-foot ascent of a steep, snow-filled gorge, known as a couloir. On the way up, they encountered a 150-foot cliff of sheer ice.

Nappi, who had broken the tip off his ice ax two days earlier, opted to skirt the ice wall by climbing a nearby snow slope. Should Butler do the same or tackle the cliff on his own? "We looked at the pitch of the cliff," Nappi says. "We both felt all right about Joe soloing it. I've seen him climb stuff like that dozens of times." The men would meet up again at the top of the pitch.

As Nappi moved away to begin his ascent on the snow, Butler started climbing. He made it over the steepest section and then decided to take a break. To give his calves a rest, he turned sideways and pressed all the points of his crampons into the ice, using two ice axes like walking sticks for support.

"Just that quickly, boom, I was sliding," Butler says. The pitch was pure ice, slick and hard. In a split second, he'd picked up speed, ice rushing by him. With only 10 to 12 feet before the drop-off, he remembers thinking, "If you don't swing your ax into the ice, you've got no chance." But there wasn't time. He shot over the edge, out of control. That's the last thing he remembers. "I blacked out," he says. He slammed into the snow 150 feet below and began to slide. When he regained consciousness, he was another 700 feet down the slope, injured and alone.

When Nappi reached the summit, his partner was nowhere in sight. Then came Butler's shouts.

"I knew I had to get down to him," Nappi recalls. Securing an anchor in the ice, he began rappelling down

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the same route Butler had been ascending. He couldn't see Butler, but scratches in the ice, gear strewn along the trail, and a depression in the snow that looked to be the size of a man's body made it clear what had happened. Nappi worked his way down the peak, wanting to move fast but knowing that one slip could send him falling, too, leaving both men without hope of help. Years of first aid and mountain rescue training raced through his mind.

"I had to get him off the mountain," Nappi says. But they were precariously perched on a 40-degree slope.

"Joe was responsive and alert when I reached him," he says. A quick assessment showed that Butler had most likely broken his left femur and snapped his collarbone. With a fall of that distance, Nappi also couldn't rule out a head injury or internal bleeding. "I had to get him off the mountain," Nappi says, but help was hours away, and they were precariously perched on a 40-degree slope.

Nappi splinted the broken leg with a snow picket, an aluminum stake that climbers use as an anchor in deep snow. Now what? They both knew they would need a helicopter to get Butler out, but there was no way anyone could land on a slope that steep. Nappi tried sliding Butler. "We got only a few feet. Joe's leg kept catching in the snow, and it was just too painful for him." Nappi remembered a plastic sled back at the hut. It would take time to get it—precious time they might not have if Butler had internal injuries—but there was no other way.

"I'm going to have to leave you, Joe," he told Butler, using a backpack upslope as a barrier to protect him from "hang fire," small rock slides that often careen down slopes in melting snow. And then he turned away. I'd better pace myself, he thought. This isn't going to end soon. As he hurried toward the hut, he tried to keep his mind off the dangers. But then a gust of wind would slap him back to reality and his friend waiting for him up the mountain.

Two hours later, Nappi was back with the sled. He tied Butler on, and they tried again. With an ice ax jabbed into the snow above him to keep them both from falling down the slope, Nappi was able to lower the sled one arm's length at a time, working his way down the couloir and onto a flatter area. It was slow work. It took them several hours to reach the foot of the slope, and by then, the wind had picked up. Snowy gusts came roaring off the glacier and stung the two men like bullets. Even this far down off the mountain, Nappi

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"What Greg did for me was amazing," says Butler (left), with Nappi inside an ice cave seven months after the accident.

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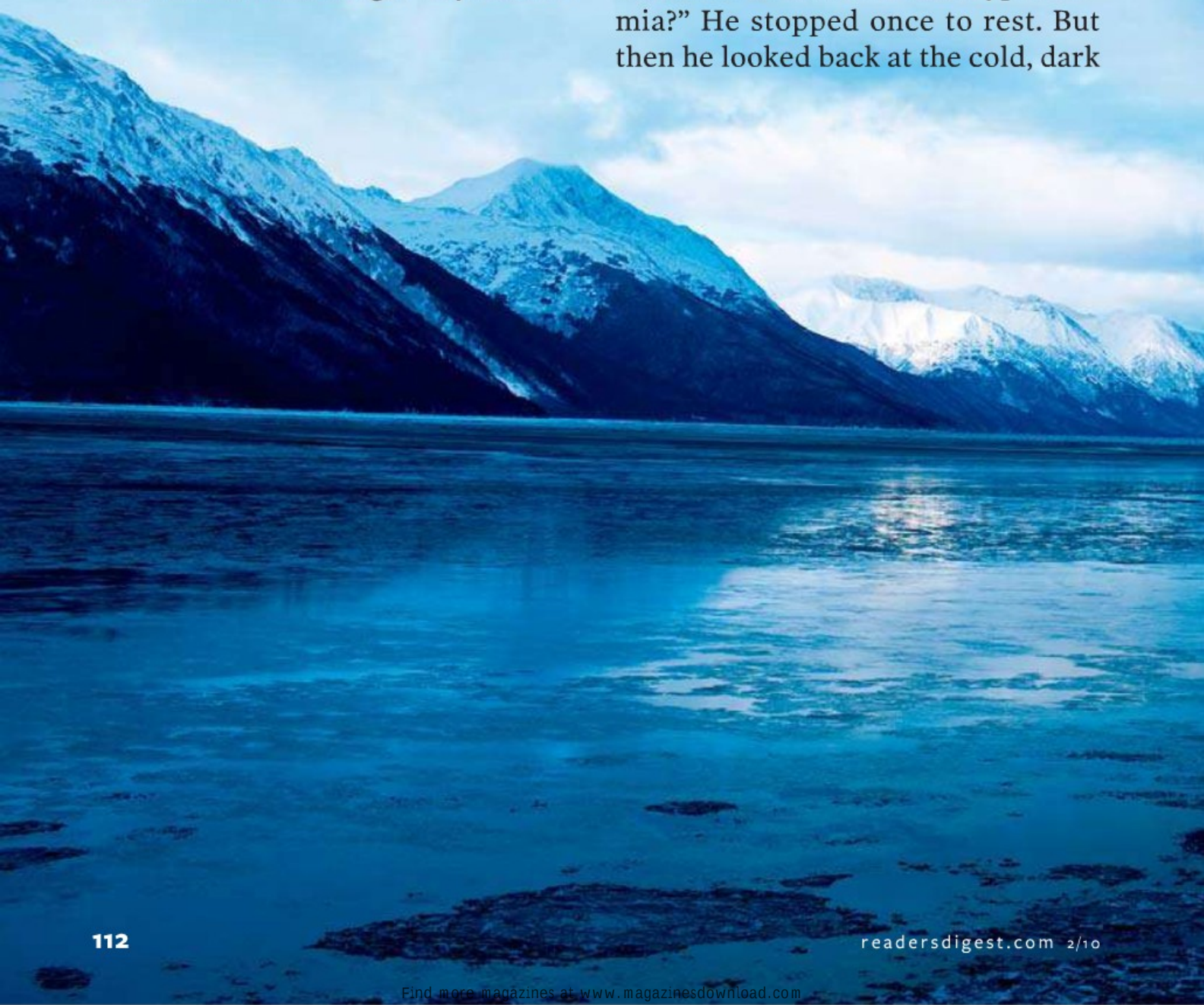
knew Butler couldn't survive for long if he was exposed to the elements. Once again, Nappi returned to the hut, this time bringing back a floorless tent, a sleeping bag, water, and food. He made Butler eat and drink something and secured the tent with rocks. "I wanted to make sure that even in that wind, the tent wasn't going to leave the earth," Nappi says.

They both knew what had to happen next. "There was no getting help if Greg didn't leave," Butler says. When Nappi hesitated, Butler urged him on. "I gave him a hug, kissed him on the head, and told him to go," says Butler.

"I will do anything to get you help," Nappi replied. "I'll kick a door down if I have to." Butler smiled. He was sure that was true. And then his partner was gone.

Along the east side of Eklutna Lake, Nappi concentrated on keeping his legs moving—skiing when he could, taking his skis off when it got too rocky. Doubt plagued him with every step. "I kept second-guessing myself: Did I do the right thing moving him or leaving him there? Did I miss something in my assessment? What about frostbite and hypothermia?" He stopped once to rest. But then he looked back at the cold, dark



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canyon behind him, thought about his partner alone in the tent, and kept moving.

Back at the tent, Butler drifted in and out of sleep, forcing himself to eat and drink in case he lost consciousness later. "I figured there wasn't much chance they'd be getting a helicopter in here anytime soon in this weather, so I told myself I wouldn't start getting crazy until 72 hours had passed," he recalls. "I thought I could keep it together for that long."

Surprisingly, the pain in his leg was still manageable. "Maybe my thigh muscles were so strong from all the climbing that they kind of held the bone in place," he says. With gusts slamming snow crystals up under the tent flaps, he worried that the tent would be blown off him. "I was pretty much crystallized," Butler says. But all he could do was try to rest, save his strength, and wait for his friend to get the help he had promised.

Fifteen miles down the mountain, an exhausted Greg Nappi reached an empty ranger station. "I knocked. I yelled. And then I kicked." Seconds later, he was inside and on a phone dialing 911.

Park ranger Ian Thomas shot up in bed to answer the call at 4 a.m. in his Anchorage town house. A mountain climber himself, Thomas knows the park intimately and is friends with

Snow blew off the canyon walls in slashes of white. Visibility was narrowing, and time was slipping away.

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many of the climbers who use it. As soon as he heard there had been an accident in a popular ice-climbing area, he thought, Man, I hope it's not someone I know.

He met Alaska State Troopers helicopter pilot Mel Nading at the airport, and 15 minutes later, they had landed at the Eklutna station. The moment Thomas saw Greg Nappi, whom he had known for years, his fears were confirmed. "When Ian recognized me," Nappi says, "his shoulders just slumped." Nappi delivered the news: It was Joe on the mountain.

"I got messed up," Butler said to his wife from the hospital gurney. She held his hand and started to cry.

Both men knew time was slipping away. Nappi quickly described where he had left Butler. The rescuers, including a paramedic who had driven in from the local fire department, climbed into the helicopter and were airborne.

As they flew, Thomas saw snow blowing off the canyon walls in slashes of white. Visibility was narrowing, but Nading, who helps rescue some 350 people every year, stayed steady at the controls. "He put us exactly where we needed to be," Thomas says.

But there was no movement from the tent. "My biggest concern at that point was not hearing anything from inside," Thomas says. "The way that Greg had described the fall, I was worried that Joe had internal injuries that would have done him in before we got there."

He called out, "Joe, it's Ian." There was a short pause and then a reply.

"Ian Thomas," Butler said, with great relief.

Butler was stabilized on a backboard and loaded into the helicopter, but he wasn't out of danger yet. Cold wind dropping down off the glacier picked up speed like an invisible avalanche. At the controls of the chopper, Nading monitored the situation warily. "The wind speed was bouncing between 40 and 50 miles an hour," he says. "Taking off into gusts like that was going to make for a very special departure."

With the aircraft rocked by gusts, Nading lifted off and headed into the wind and toward the glacier's ice wall, hoping for enough lift to withstand the expected downdraft when he turned downslope. He held the position as long as he could and then, at the last instant, spun the craft in midair, tail to the wind. The helicopter rose up and out of the valley.

Within minutes, they landed at Providence Alaska Medical Center in Anchorage, where Butler's wife, Amara Liggett, waited. From the gur-

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ney, Butler looked at her and reached for her hand. "I got messed up," he said.

Liggett held his hand and started to cry. "Yeah, you did," she answered.

"That was probably the hardest part of the whole day for me," Nappi remembers, "seeing Joe with his wife in tears." Off the mountain after hours of physical and emotional distress and now knowing that his friend was safe, Nappi finally let his guard down. "I welled up pretty good at that point," he says.

Butler spent three days in the hospital, with his wife, climbing partner, and friends at his bedside almost every minute. The close-knit Alaskan climbing community came together to support Butler even when he was out of the hospital. "There was always someone there feeding me, helping me get around," Butler recalls. The owners of the Bear Tooth pub, a local hangout where Liggett works as a manager and server, collected donations and matched every one. They raised more than $5,000 for Butler, who faced huge medical bills without insurance.

Less than a year later, Butler is climbing mountains again, grateful for his partner's courage that day. "He knows I would do the same for him," he says.

Indeed, Nappi does know: "When you head into the mountains, you have to understand that this type of thing can happen," he says. "And if it does, the responsibility is all on your shoulders. It just so happens that this time, it was Joe who slipped, and it was my turn for the responsibility of the rescue. Next time, it could be the other way around."

As he recovers, Butler can look out the window of his Anchorage apartment and see the mountains of the Chugach range. He and Nappi already have their eye on another Alaskan adventure. It's a mountain called Awesome Peak.

I'LL NEVER GROW UP

Robbie, my nine-year-old grandson, recently asked his mother about puberty. She explained that it occurs when children's bodies begin to change. "Boys," she said, "grow taller and develop muscles. Their voices deepen, and they start to grow hair, like facial hair." She paused. "Do you understand?"

"Yes," he replied. "I just hope it happens on a Saturday, when I'm not in school." *Michael Stephenson*

FILLERS ILLUSTRATED BY NIGEL BUCHANAN

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Quick Study

Border Control

BY LISA GOFF

Time was, U.S. citizens could stroll across our nation's borders without even showing a passport. No more. A rising tide of illegal immigrants and post-9/11 fears have sparked a desire to fortify the 6,000 miles we share with Mexico and Canada. As Congress prepares to tackle immigration reform, border control will be front and center in the debate.

Flash Points

Fence me in Where strands of barbed wire once glinted in the night, 18-foot-high slabs of metal now hold back the tide of illegal immigrants on the nation's southwest border. Or do they? The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) boasts that the 639 miles of fence, mostly near urban areas, helped slash arrests for illegal crossings by 23 percent in the past year, from 723,825 in fiscal 2008 to 556,041 in fiscal 2009. Critics charge that the drop has more to do with the shaky U.S. economy and tougher enforcement of immigration laws farther inland than with the $4 million–per–mile fence. Environmentalists say the fence changes the flow of seasonal rivers, killing off cottonwood and willow groves, habitats for dozens of bird species. Meanwhile, migrants turn to smugglers to sneak them across the unfenced stretches of the desert, where the risk of death is higher.

Virtual security Recently derided as "cameras on a pole" by Rep. Michael Rogers (R-AL), high-tech radar towers and sensors could eventually guard the 4,000-mile Canadian border and the 2,000-mile border with Mexico. The U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agency says it is still in testing phase; current plans call for a "virtual fence" installed along 50-plus miles of the southern border at a cost of $1.1 billion.

Cost and inconvenience Meanwhile, the Canadian border is patrolled by 1,946 customs agents—a 77 percent jump since 2006. That's dwarfed by the 17,324 agents on the southern border, a 57 percent increase. Even so, long lines still form to cross both borders, prodding the CBP to post estimates of wait times (apps.cbp.gov/bwt). New rules imposed last June require even newborns to pony up a passport or the equivalent to cross. These tougher rules make life harder for drug runners and smugglers but also for tourists, truckers, commuters, businesses, and, it turns out,

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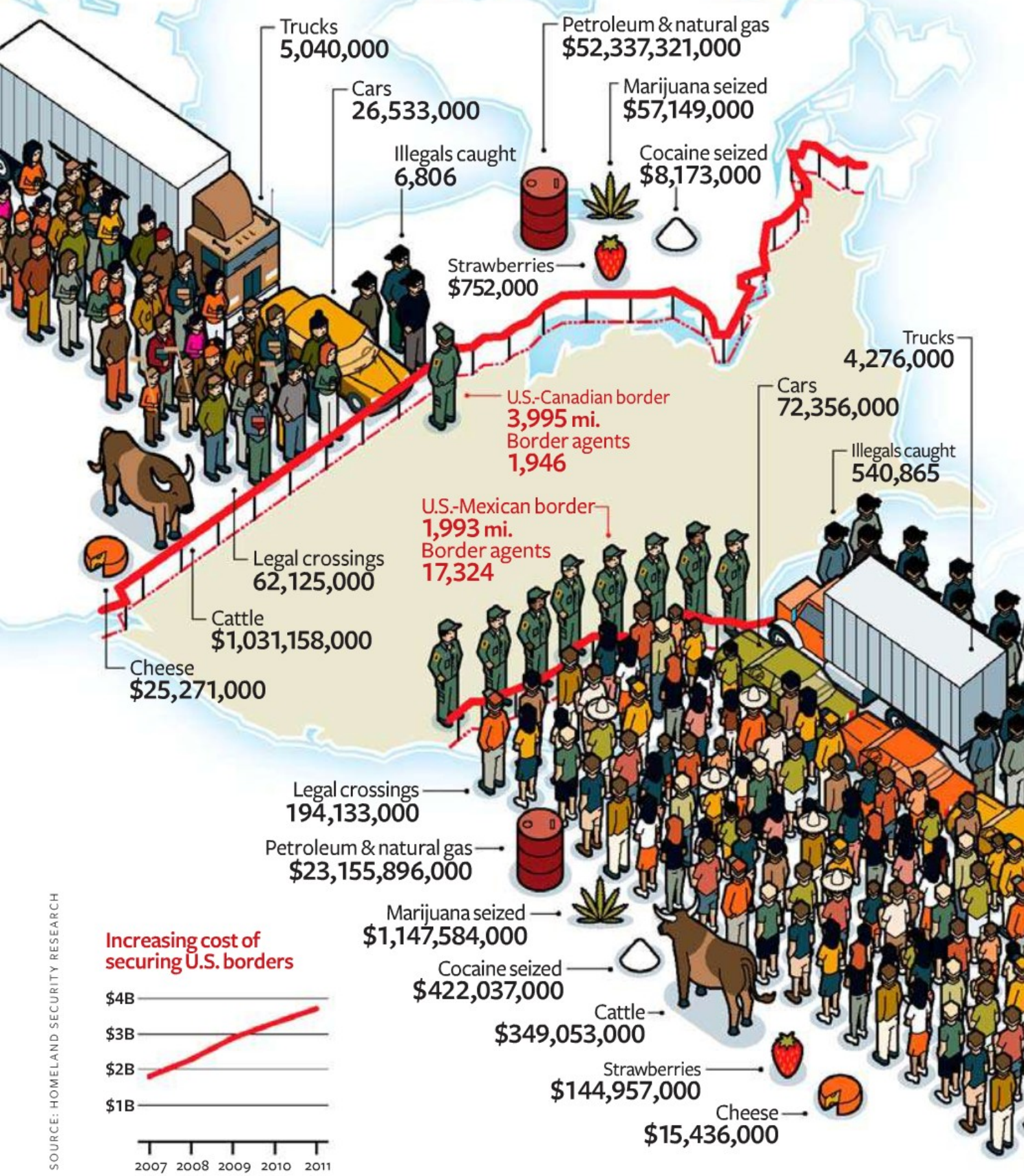
The 'In' Crowd: A Year of Crossings



Increasing cost of securing U.S. borders

SOURCE: HOMELAND SECURITY RESEARCH

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marathon runners. Participants in the *Detroit Free Press* marathon in October had to show passports when registering for the race, which crossed briefly into Canada.

▶ **Immigration policy** President Obama supports amnesty for illegal immigrants—an idea that outrages anti-immigrant groups like the Minuteman Project, Patriots' Border Alliance, and various "Save Our City/State" groups. But Obama has cracked down in other ways. Federal prosecutions for immigration crimes jumped 14 percent last year, surging as much as 40 percent in some Southwestern districts. Immigration agencies are auditing employment records of 650 U.S. businesses as part of a plan to hold employers responsible for hiring illegal immigrants.

▶ **Deadly detention** More than 100 illegal immigrants have died in U.S. detention centers since 2003, in facilities that activists describe as inhumane. Congress authorized $1.8 billion for new detention centers last year, and the Obama administration has promised an overhaul of the entire system.

"Mexican immigration is not and has never been out of control. It rises and falls with labor demand, and if legitimate avenues for entry are available, migrants enter legally."

Douglas Massey, Princeton University, author, *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: U.S. Immigration Policy in the Age of Globalization*

THE TIME LINE

Emiliano Zapata

1819 / U.S.-Mexico boundary set by Spain and U.S.

1846 / U.S.-Canada boundary established by Great Britain and U.S.

1910 / Mexican Revolution drives thousands of Mexicans across U.S. border.

1915 / U.S. Congress authorizes "mounted inspectors" on the Mexican border.

1924 / The U.S. Border Patrol is established.

1927 / Over one million Mexicans are estimated to be living in the U.S. illegally.

1942 / Bracero program begins, bringing nearly 5 million Mexican temporary laborers to the U.S. over the next 22 years.

1954 / Operation Wetback—as it's unfortunately called—deports more than 3.8 million people to Mexico.

1965 / Maquiladoras, factories built on the Mexican side of the border, bring masses of cheap labor to work for companies assembling and exporting goods back to the U.S.

1994 / The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) increases maquiladora populations and

AP IMAGES; LOOMIS DEAN/TIME & LIFE PICTURES/GETTY IMAGES

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Forward Thinking

Border bots Launched from bases in Grand Rapids, North Dakota, and Sierra Vista, Arizona, gliderlike unmanned drones patrol our northern and southern borders. The blue-and-gray aircraft use infrared cameras and mapping radar to spot movement, streaming live video to controllers on the ground. Called Predators, the border drones are similar to what we're using over Pakistani skies and can fly for 20 hours without refueling.

Biometrics Employers currently use a voluntary Web-based system called E-Verify to screen new hires' Social Security numbers. Critics complain that the no-match rate is high—from 3 percent to 13 percent—and that the system is vulnerable to identity thieves. Sen. Charles Schumer (D-NY) wants to use biometrics such as fingerprints instead of E-Verify.

Really fast boats In September, the DHS unveiled a $900,000 prototype of a speedboat designed to patrol the nation's border in the Great Lakes. The 43-foot craft has four 350-horsepower engines and a top speed of 75 mph. Heat sensors on the high-tech boat can spot a suspect three miles away.

Crowdsourcing A group of Texas sheriffs have installed video cameras along the Rio Grande and hooked them up to the Internet, inviting tens of thousands of cyber-deputies to keep an eye out for smugglers and illegal crossers. Check out the virtual posse at blueservo.net.

2001 / September 11 terrorist attacks prompt a Level 1 alert at U.S. borders. A common misconception holds that the terrorists entered the U.S. via Canada.

2004 / Minuteman Project recruits civilians to patrol the Mexican border.

2006 / Secure Fence Act authorizes another stretch of fence along the Mexican border.

2007 / 11.8 million illegal immigrants are living in the U.S.

2009 / The State Department announces that as of June 1, 2009, citizens of Canada, Mexico, and the U.S. must show passports or other approved ID at our borders.

1996 / President Bill Clinton calls for a crackdown on illegal immigration, bolsters border patrols, installs sensors, and builds 40 miles of fence along the Mexican border.

1994 / North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) expands trade with our neighbors to the north and south.

NICHOLAS ROBERTS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES; SANDY HUFFAKER/CORBIS

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I can't wait to crawl in bed with
you tonight. Pray that my flights
are smooth w/ no delays.
By the way, I'm sleeping in tomorrow.
-Are we really waiting till 2011 for babies?

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LOVE, BY THE Letters

For Valentine's Day, we searched the country for inspiring love notes—and asked Bill Shapiro, editor of a book of love letters, for advice on writing one that's a keeper

BY RORY EVANS

You started collecting love letters four years ago. How do you write one that stands out?

A great love letter is personal, with something that refers to your secret history together. If you always go to the same diner on Sunday morning, get one of its paper place mats and write your letter on that; it's a reminder of a shared moment. You also want unguarded honesty—really let your emotions fly. And maybe this is most important: Your letter doesn't have to be for a particular occasion. Three weeks before Mother's Day. Tuesday the

Whenever Claire Vath, 26, travels on business, she hides notes for her husband, Stephen, also 26, around their Birmingham, Alabama, home. "Our relationship was founded on letters, e-mails, and instant messages," Claire says. "We have boxes of notes from the past ten years." P.S. They've decided not to wait until 2011 for a baby.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY MILLER MOBLEY/REDUX

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A 1994 note from a woman to her boyfriend, whom she later married. "This is great because it's so succinct and specific," Shapiro says. "The 'four nights' and 'four million more' say it all."

12th. It means even more when it's not expected. Then it's an uncontrollable declaration of love.

What if you want to express your feelings but you don't think you're a good writer?

People don't believe this, but it doesn't matter how well you write. It's the fact that you committed it to paper. You could draw a picture of a window and write "I love to watch you through this every day as you come home from work." A love letter is a reflection of the person who wrote it.

Do you have a favorite kind of love letter?

I usually like the ones that are a little complicated, that say we've been through something together and have come out the other side, because I think that's what love is about. I also love the starburst ones, where you feel someone's heart exploding with joy and passion.

Do you think the space constraints on Twitter and text messages will hurt love letters of the future?

Not necessarily. You can text someone "I am thinking about your eyes" as you're on the bus going home. It's short, but it's unexpected, and you can string many messages together. It's so immediate—you're saying, I am thinking about you right now.

So electronic love letters can be good. But do letters that are handwritten, stamped, and mailed earn extra points?

A letter doesn't have to compete with e-mail; you can use both, at different moments. But when was the last time you got a letter in the mail? I don't mean a bill or a catalog but a letter from a lover. That letter is now more meaningful because it's so rare.

We know that love can be fleeting. What possesses us to write all this stuff down?

We want love to last, and we think it will. Writing it down is a hopeful act: It guarantees that in some way, it *will* last. It's like taking a picture of a baby—you are capturing something you know is going to change.

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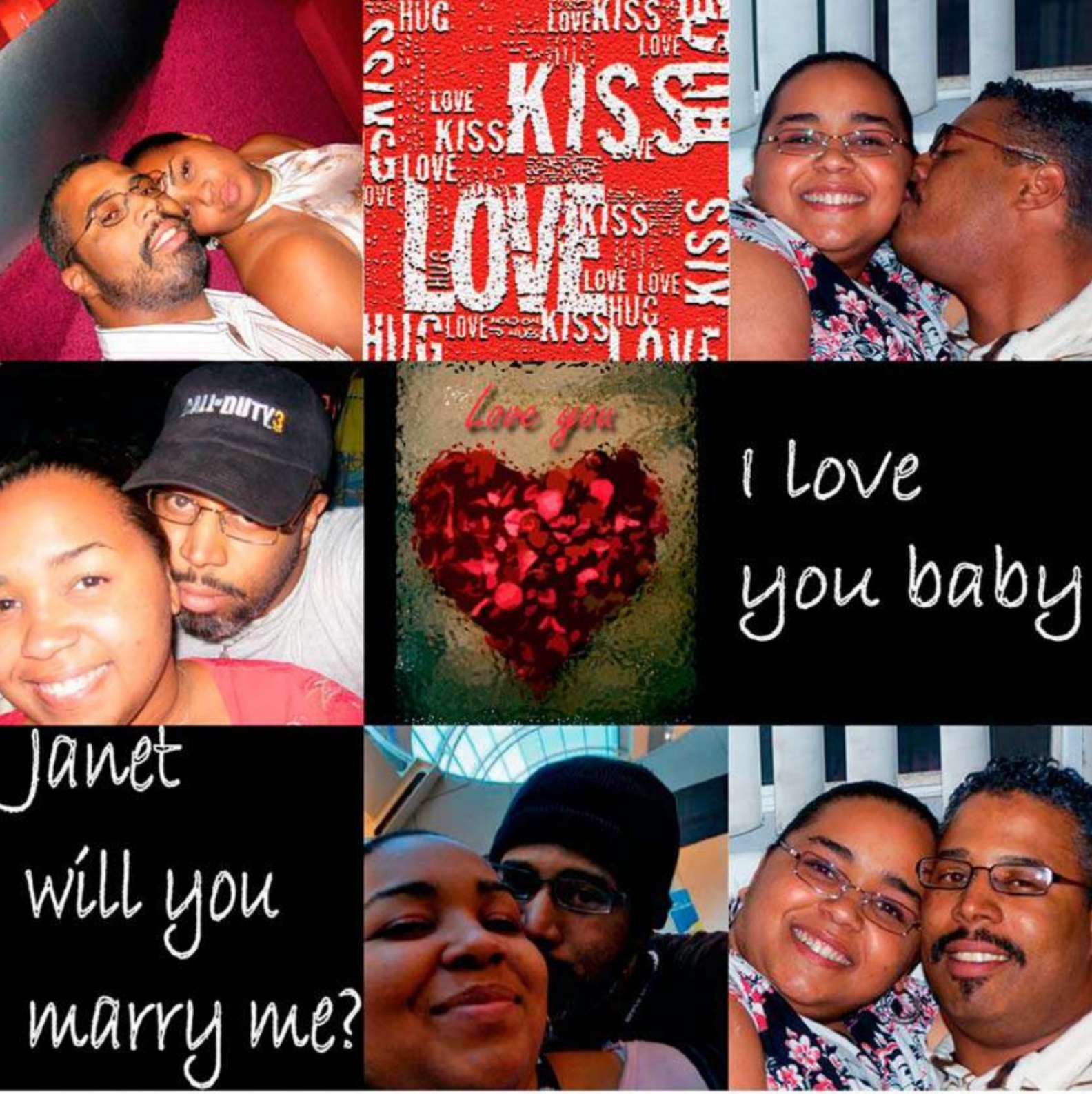

William Sisson, 39, posted this collage on Facebook the same day he proposed to Janet James, 31. "This is the perfect proposal for the Facebook era," Shapiro says. (She said yes.)

It can be scary to send a love letter, can't it?

Yes, it's very intimate. There is always the question at the beginning of a relationship: When is it the right time to say "I love you" without getting laughed at? The risk is there, but if the feeling is reciprocated, the reward is so sweet.

Bill Shapiro is the editor of *Other People's Love Letters: 150 Letters You Were Never Meant to See.* Love letters researched by Elizabeth Levine.

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Leland,

Do you like me or love me? I love you.

(Love) or like

circle one!

Write Back PLEASE

J|G / L|E and L|E / J|G

Love, Jana

I Love you Jana

But don't tell anybody

and so they will tease me

Love Lee

I'll

Circle!

O X X

Fourth graders Jana Glasgow and Leland Elliott (circled at left) shared this exchange in 1973. "He was my first love," Jana says. "Whenever we watched a film in school, we held hands under the desk in the dark!"

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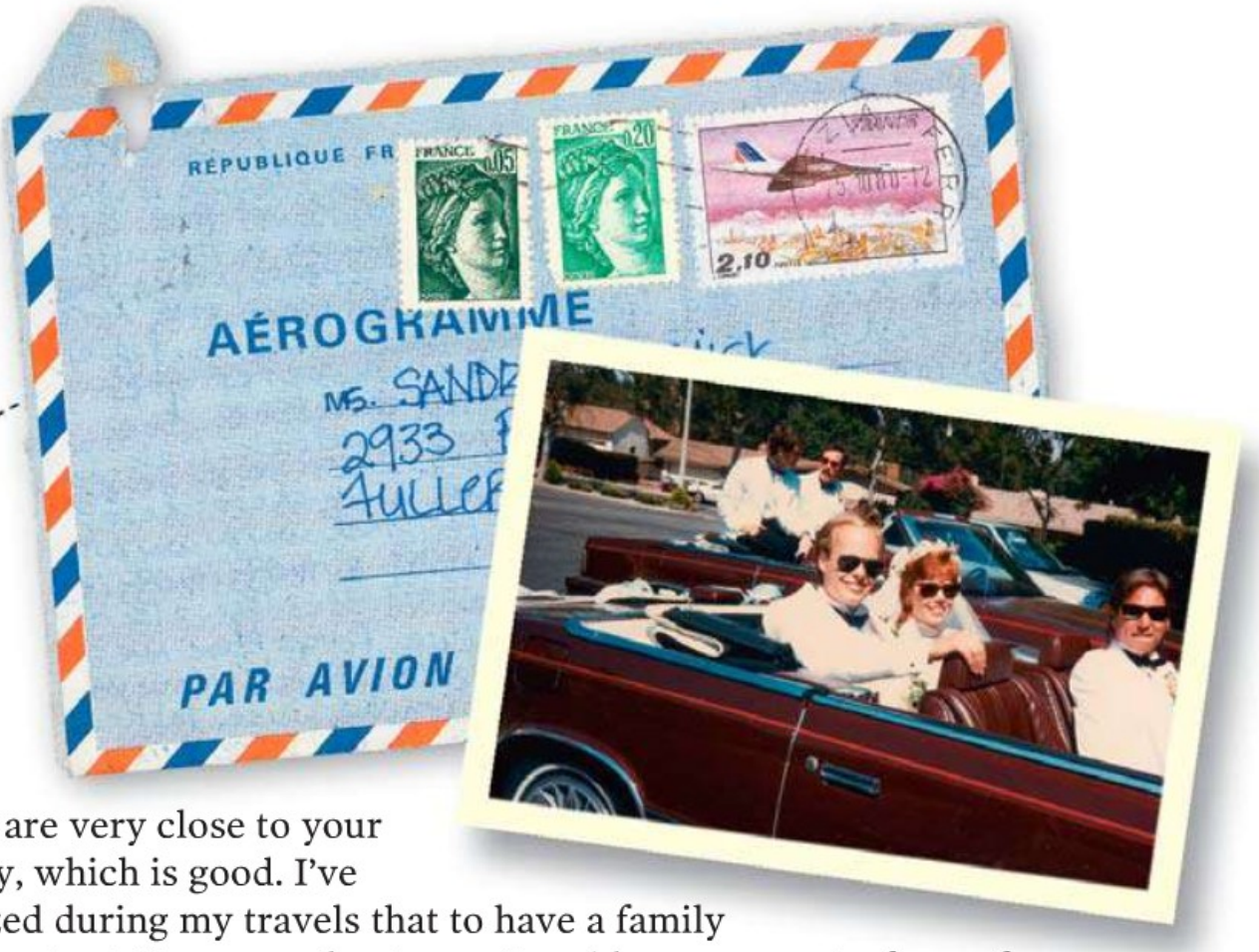
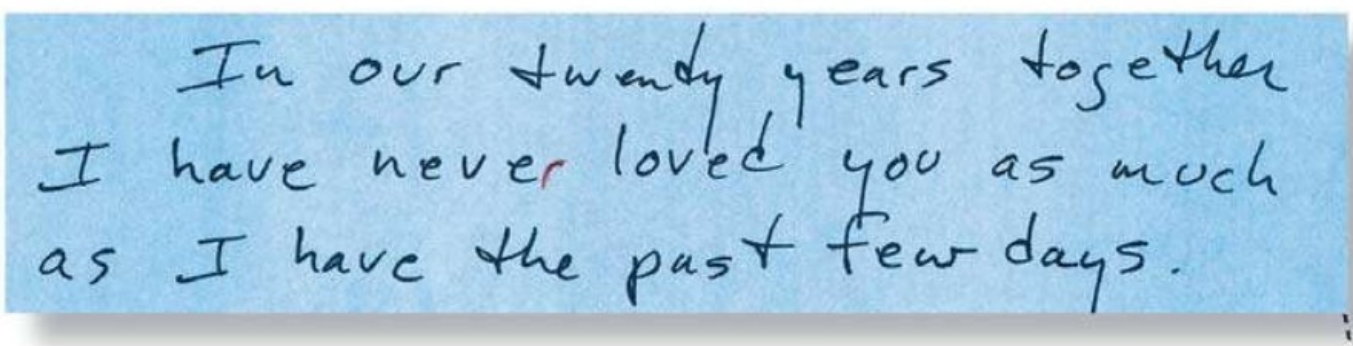


"You are very close to your family, which is good. I've realized during my travels that to have a family is important. I'm crazy about you. Consider me as part of your family. Forget my Mr. Know-It-All demeanor. Under it all, I love you."

From John Hill to Sandy McCormick in 1980, after they'd traveled through Europe together after college. She returned to the United States, and he followed her with his correspondence. They've been married for 23 years.



"... You are more than ever the air that I breathe. I am certain that this sweet, vulnerable little soul was entrusted to us because we have such a special love. I am more than ever looking forward to our lives together. Thank you so much for the past nine months, for little Ryan, and for being the best wife and soul mate a husband could have."

A husband to his wife, a few days after she'd given birth to a son with Down syndrome. At the time, they knew he'd need heart surgery. The family is now thriving, just as predicted in this letter.

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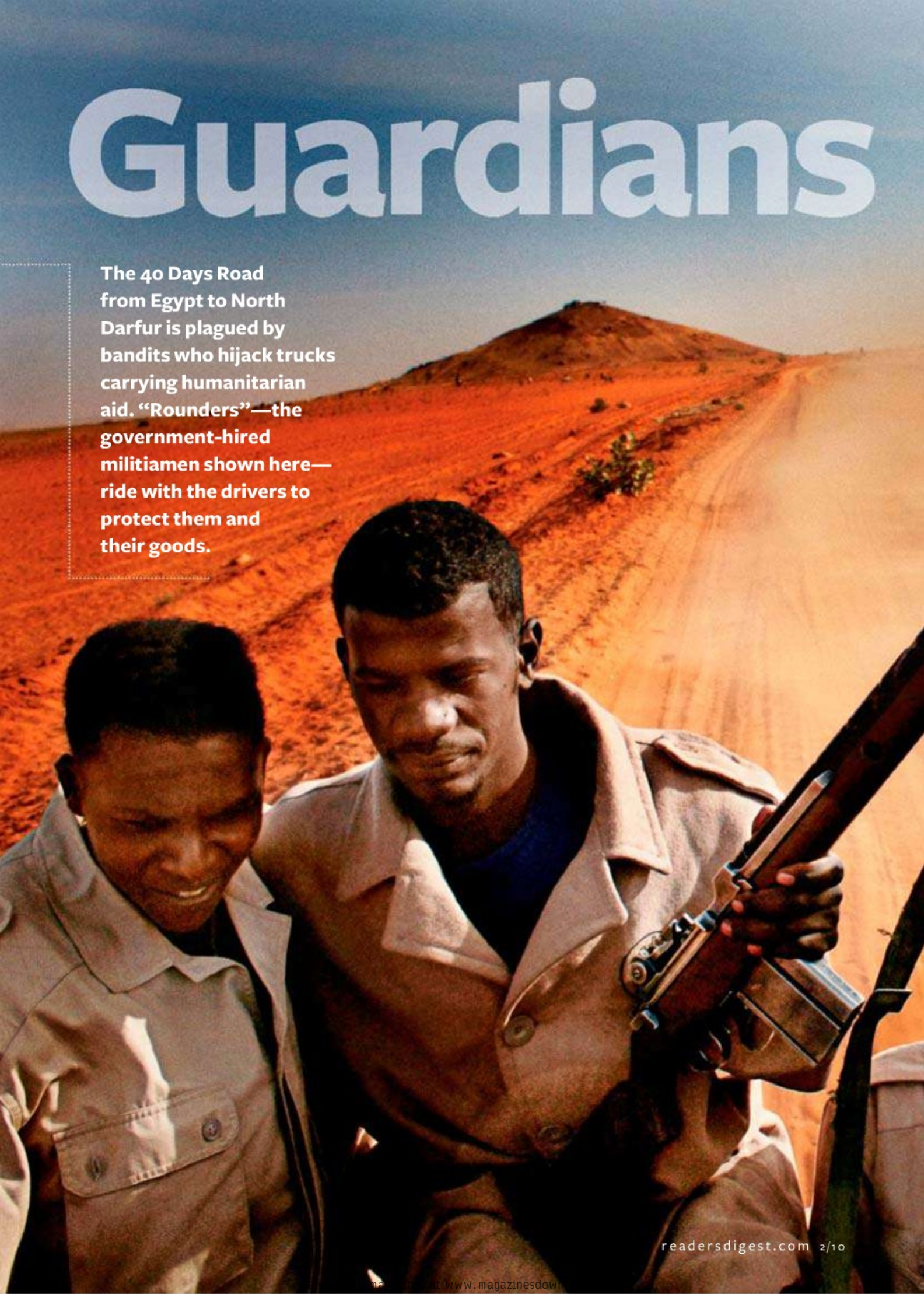
Guardians

The 40 Days Road from Egypt to North Darfur is plagued by bandits who hijack trucks carrying humanitarian aid. "Rounders"—the government-hired militiamen shown here—ride with the drivers to protect them and their goods.



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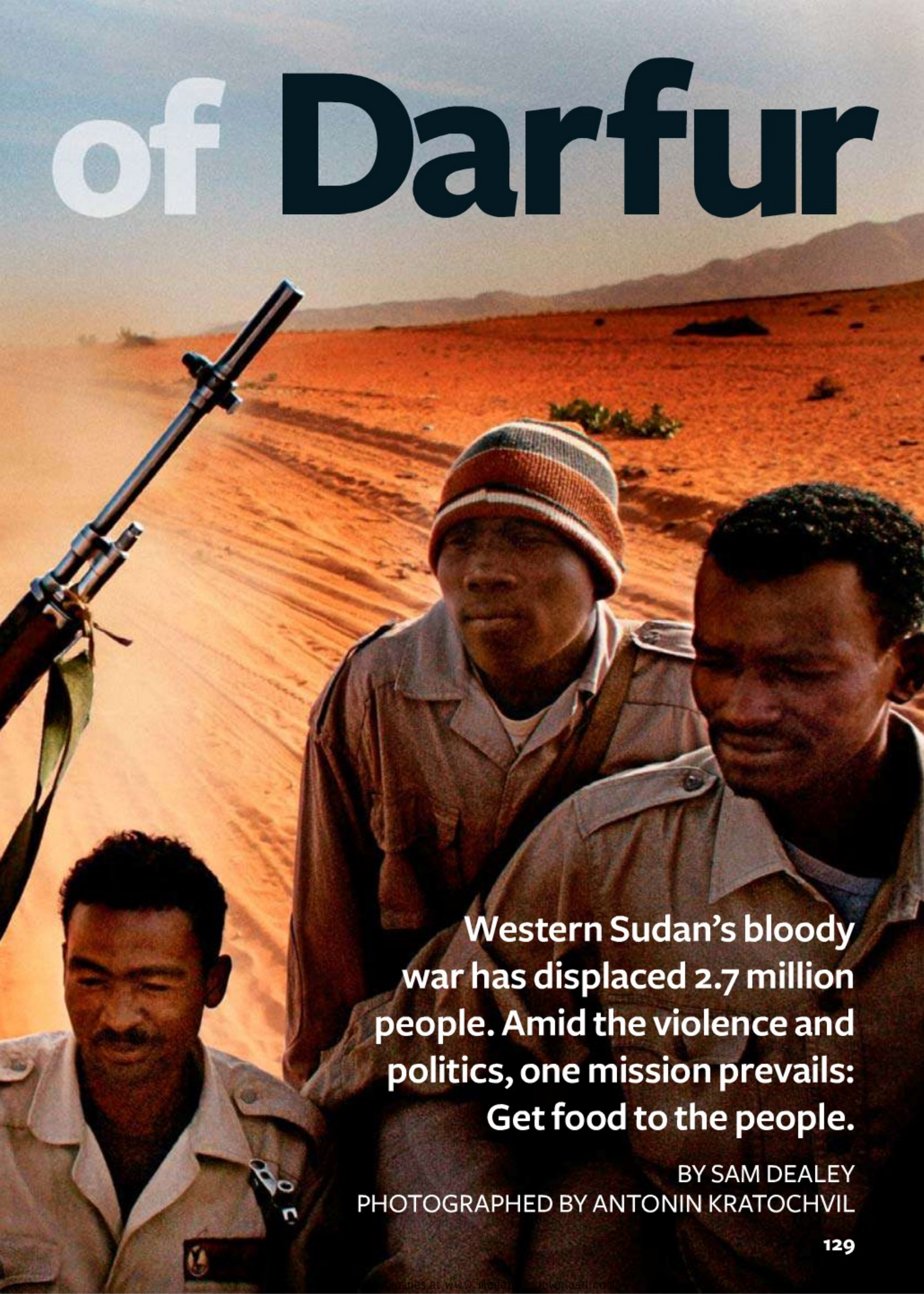
# of Darfur



Western Sudan's bloody war has displaced 2.7 million people. Amid the violence and politics, one mission prevails: Get food to the people.

BY SAM DEALEY
PHOTOGRAPHED BY ANTONIN KRATOCHVIL

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Hassan manages the World Food Programme warehouse in El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur. This facility—stocked with maize, sugar, beans, vegetable oil, cereal, and salt—feeds 1.5 million people.

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Darfur is a no-man's-land, a California-sized stretch of hot, harsh desert in Sudan, Africa's largest country. It was in Darfur, seven years ago, that hostility between the Arab-dominated government and non-Arab rebel groups erupted in a brutal onslaught of mass murder, torture, and rape that outraged the world. More than 300,000 of the region's six million people have died, with millions more forced from their homes. Peace talks collapsed in 2006, though the international community keeps trying. The Sudanese president, Omar al-Bashir, was indicted for war crimes last March, but he remains defiantly at large.

In my six years of reporting from Darfur, the killing has subsided significantly. But hatred, violence, and misery remain. The two dominant rebel groups, once considered by some to be "good guys," have splintered into as many as 30 factions who fight one another and prey on the innocent. They terrorize the roads around Darfur, attacking humanitarian aid trucks that travel hundreds of miles from food warehouses to refugee camps. The rebels strike in and around the camps, too, robbing and beating refugees and kidnapping aid workers.

Amid the turmoil—which now includes escalating battles in south Sudan and the prospect of even more violence during the April elections—meeting Darfur's need for food requires a heroic effort. Humanitarian workers and Darfuri citizens risk their lives every day to make sure thousands of bags of food successfully complete the dangerous journey to the camps. At the end of that journey, hungry people are fed and the perilous mission begins again.

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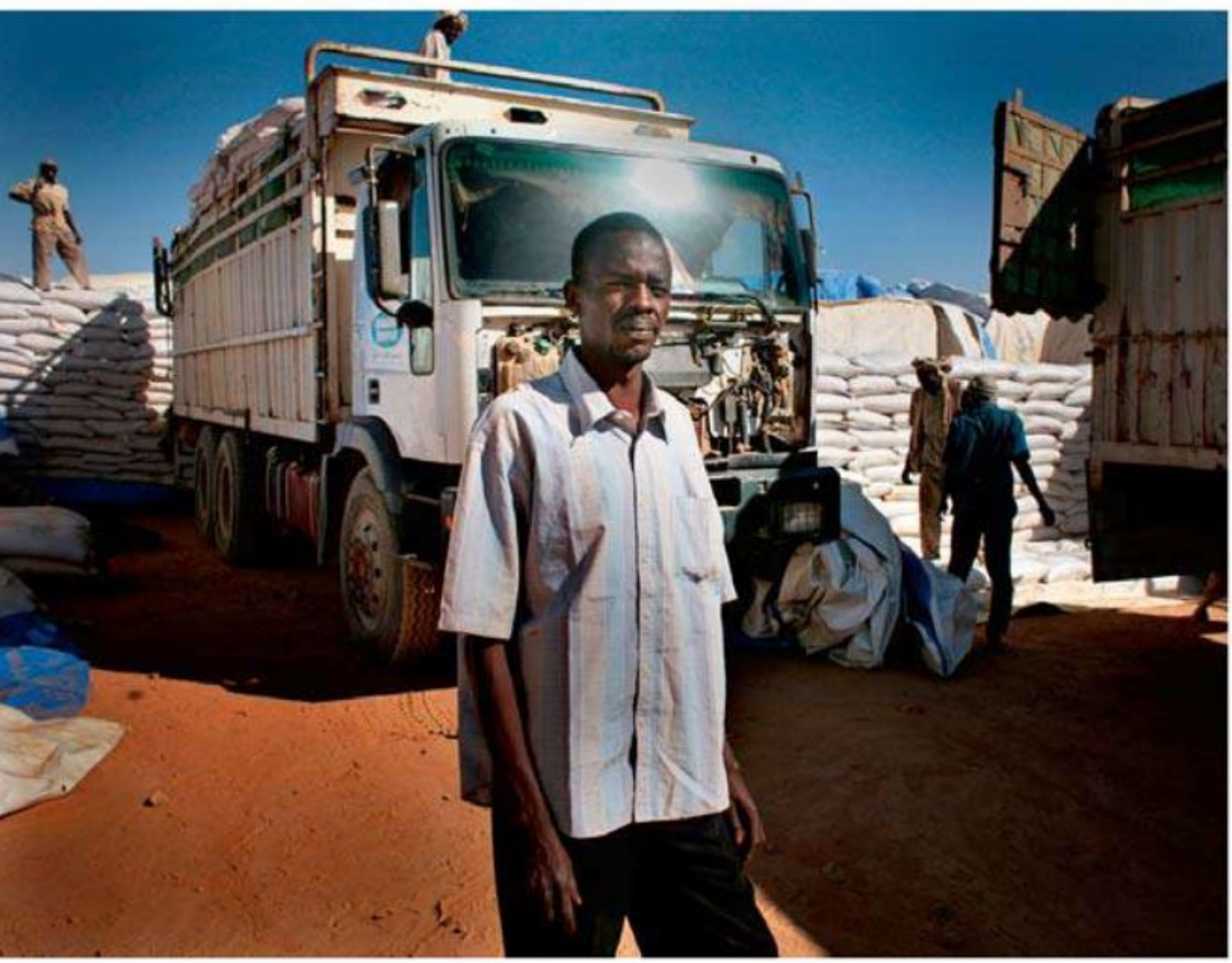
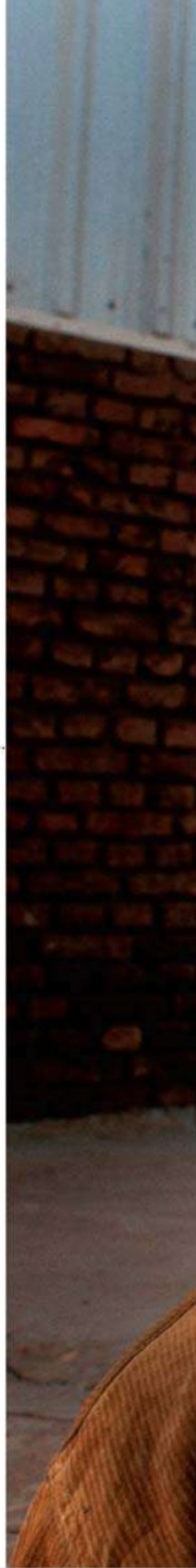
Two ordinary Darfuris, Ahmed Bashir Ahmed (below) and Mohammed Adam (right), are among the truckers whose loads of goods have been stolen en route to the camps. In September 2008, Ahmed, 32, was driving in a caravan of 20 to 30 trucks (the more vehicles, the safer the convoy tends to be). When he got a flat tire, he hitched a ride on another truck and left his assistant behind to wait for help. "At night," Ahmed says, "people on camels came and whipped him and took everything"—including six tons of sugar, a hundred bags of lentils, and $250, more than a month's pay. "Banditry is everywhere. At any moment, you can expect to be dead."

In an incident two months later, rebels stole money and a truck from Mohammed, 25, as he drove from El Fasher toward Khartoum, Sudan's capital. But he'll keep driving. "It is good to help people," he says. "The refugees did not ask for their situation. God gave it to them. But God charged us with helping."





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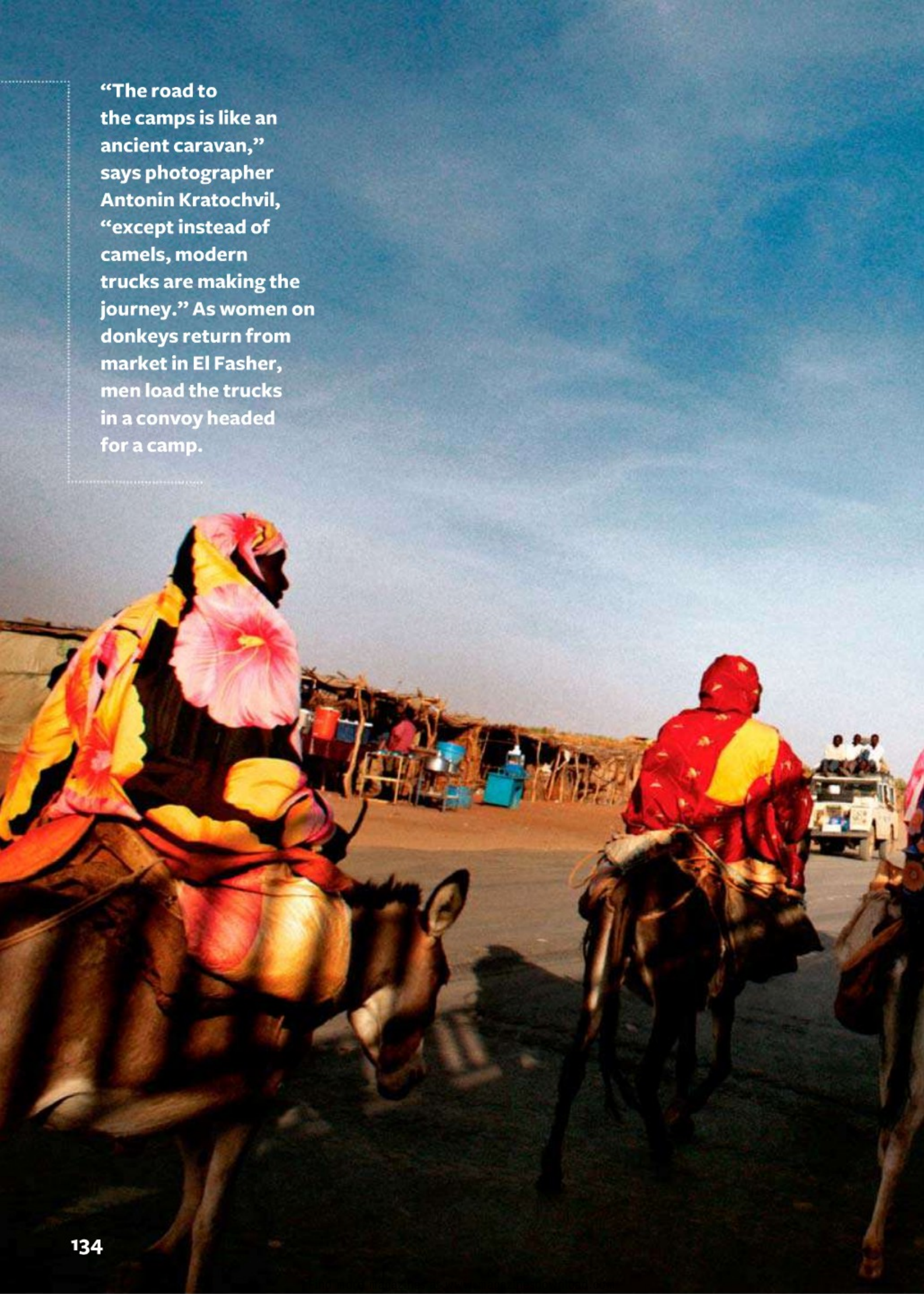

"The road to the camps is like an ancient caravan," says photographer Antonin Kratochvil, "except instead of camels, modern trucks are making the journey." As women on donkeys return from market in El Fasher, men load the trucks in a convoy headed for a camp.

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A community forms near the warehouses as drivers wait for convoys to assemble and move out. At a teahouse (left), a woman prepares to serve truckers looking to escape the oppressive heat and swarming flies; other men pass time by playing cards and smoking sweet tobacco from hookahs (above). Sometimes the roads are so unsafe that drivers wait as long as two weeks for the rounders to say they can leave.

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Thirty-five thousand tons of food moves across Darfur each month, about 70 percent of it donated by the United States and most of it distributed by the World Food Programme. The Sudanese government is sometimes as much an obstacle to food delivery as the roads are: Humanitarian agencies

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are routinely threatened with expulsion for speaking out against rape and other atrocities. After the International Criminal Court in The Hague indicted Sudan's president for crimes against humanity, 13 aid groups were kicked out of the country; the WFP was one of the few organizations allowed to stay.

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In Abu Shouk, one of the largest camps in North Darfur, a boy runs to greet a truck carrying African Union and UN peacekeepers. Food trucks are expected soon, bringing provisions for the 50,000 people camped here.

To help the humanitarian effort in Darfur, go to friendsofwfp.org.

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How to Sound Smarter

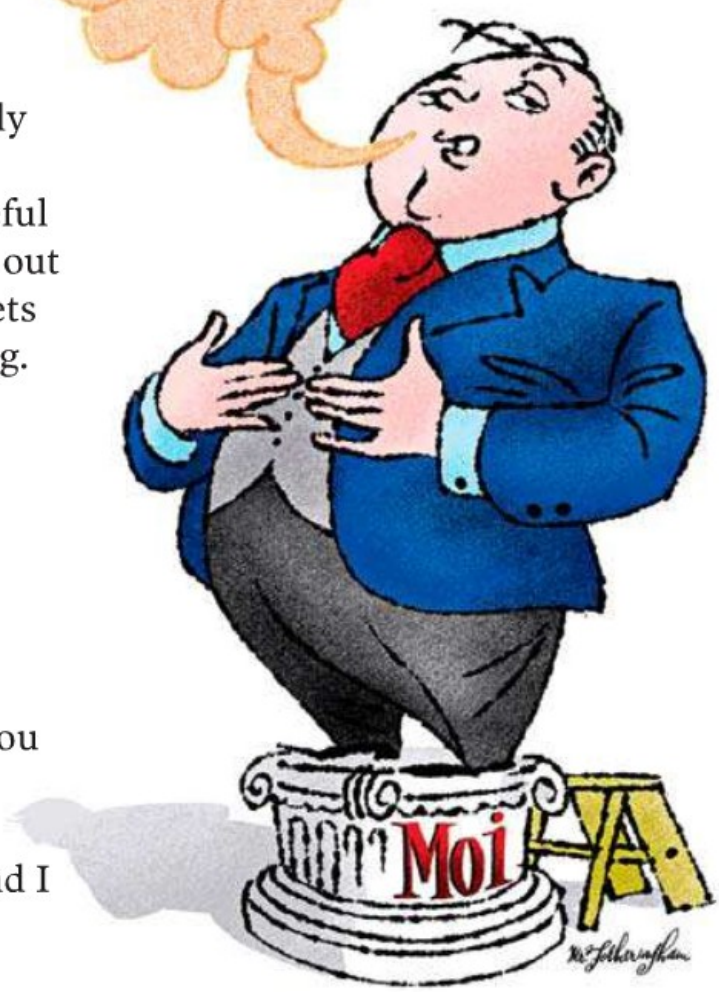
The **Reader's Digest Version** of those rules for talking and writing—the ones you missed in high school

BY MELISSA DEMEO AND PAUL SILVERMAN

You almost never mean: Hopefully
You almost always mean: I hope
Why: *Hopefully* means "in a hopeful manner." "I hope the boss lets us out early" and "Hopefully, the boss lets us out early" aren't the same thing.

You almost never mean: More importantly
You almost always mean: More important
Why: *More* or *most important* is probably what you want. Only if you're a pompous blowhard do you say things importantly.

You never mean: Between you and I
You always mean: Between you and me



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Why: *Between you and I* sounds fancy, and therefore right, but don't be so quick to belittle Cookie Monster ("Me want cookies!"). In this case, *me* is correct because it's the object of the preposition *between*.

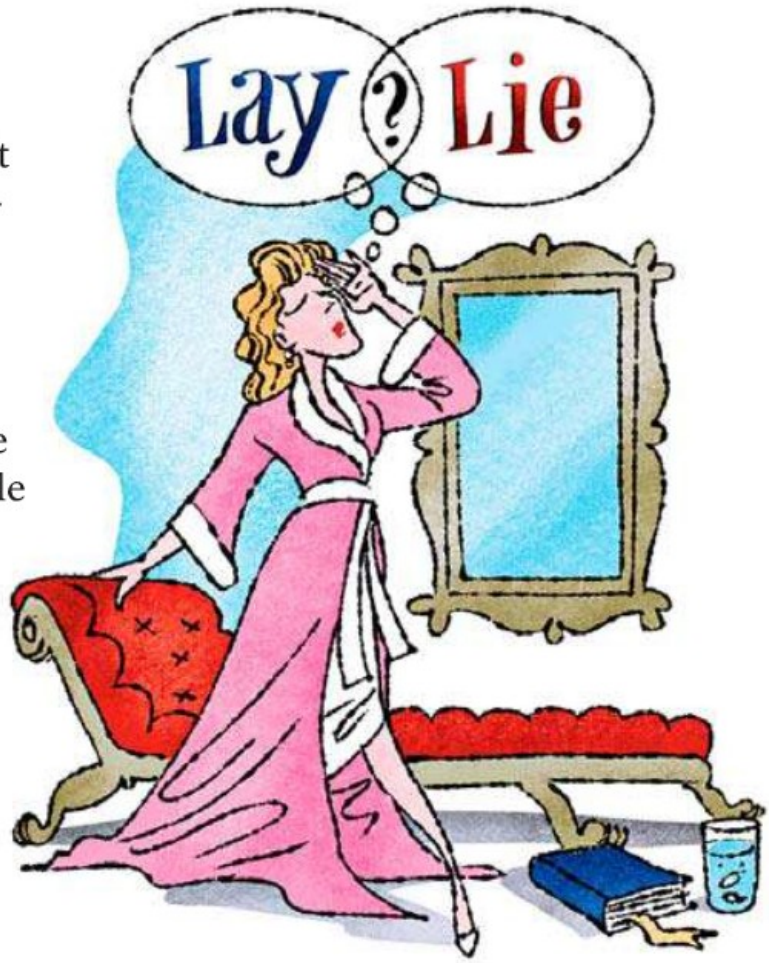
You almost never mean: Assessable
You almost always mean: Accessible
Why: A library is wheelchair-accessible. Your house is assessable by the county that taxes it.

You almost never mean:
I feel badly
You almost always mean:
I feel bad
Why: Is your sense of touch physically impaired (almost never) or are you feeling some guilt after screwing up (almost always)?

You never mean: Equally as well (important, etc.)
You always mean: Equally well
Why: The *as* isn't necessary. "I speak Latin and pig Latin equally well."

You never mean: The reason is because
You always mean: The reason is that
Why: The reason is that the word *reason* implies *because*. Likewise, why say "the reason why" when you can say "the reason"?

You almost never mean: I need to lay down
You almost always mean: I need to lie down



Why: This is another case where people think (wrongly) that a particular word sounds more "educated." *Lay* and *lie* are not interchangeable. *Lie* doesn't require an object: "I need to lie down." But *lay* does: "I need to lay my head down." Confusion kicks in because of the past tense of both verbs—*lie* becomes *lay*; *lay* becomes *laid*—but the usage stays the same.

You never mean: Chaise lounge
You always mean: Chaise longue
Why: People have been getting this wrong for at least a century. The proper phrase is French and translates as "long chair."

You never mean: ATM machine, PIN number
You always mean: ATM, PIN
Why: Redundancy ("automated

ILLUSTRATED BY EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

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teller machine machine," "personal identification number number").

You almost never mean: Historical
You almost always mean: Historic
Why: In short, *historic* means "significant" ("a historic election"). But if you intend "occurring in or relating to history," go with *historical* (think "historical data" or "a historical link between the two world wars"). By the way, it's never "*an* historic/historical event." The vowel sound "a" should precede a consonant sound (like the hard "h" in *historic*).

You never mean: The person that
You always mean: The person who
Why: A human is a "who." Anything else (yes, including animals) is a "that."

You never mean: Could of
You always mean: Could have
Why: This error pops up because of the similar pronunciations. But remember, every sentence needs a verb: "I could have written a better cover letter."

You never mean: Most everyone
You always mean: Everyone
Why: Make up your mind: If you truly mean "every person," use just *everyone*. If not, say *most people*.

You never mean: I feel nauseous
You always mean: I feel nauseated
Why: In strict terms, *nauseous* means "to cause nausea" (as in "a hateful, nauseous person"); *nauseated* means "afflicted with nausea" (as in "I'm nauseated").

You never mean: Very unique
You always mean: Unique
Why: Unique things and people are one of a kind, absolute.

You never mean: For all intensive purposes
You always mean: For all intents and purposes
Why: Even if you do get it right, you don't need this expression. It's just filler.

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You almost never mean: I literally laughed my head off
You almost always mean: I laughed my head off
Why: *Literally* means "actually" and is best reserved for real events.

You never mean: Merge together
You always mean: Merge
Why: The phrase is redundant (as are combinations like *absolute necessity*, *free gift*, and *a pair of twins*—unless you mean two sets of twins, that is).

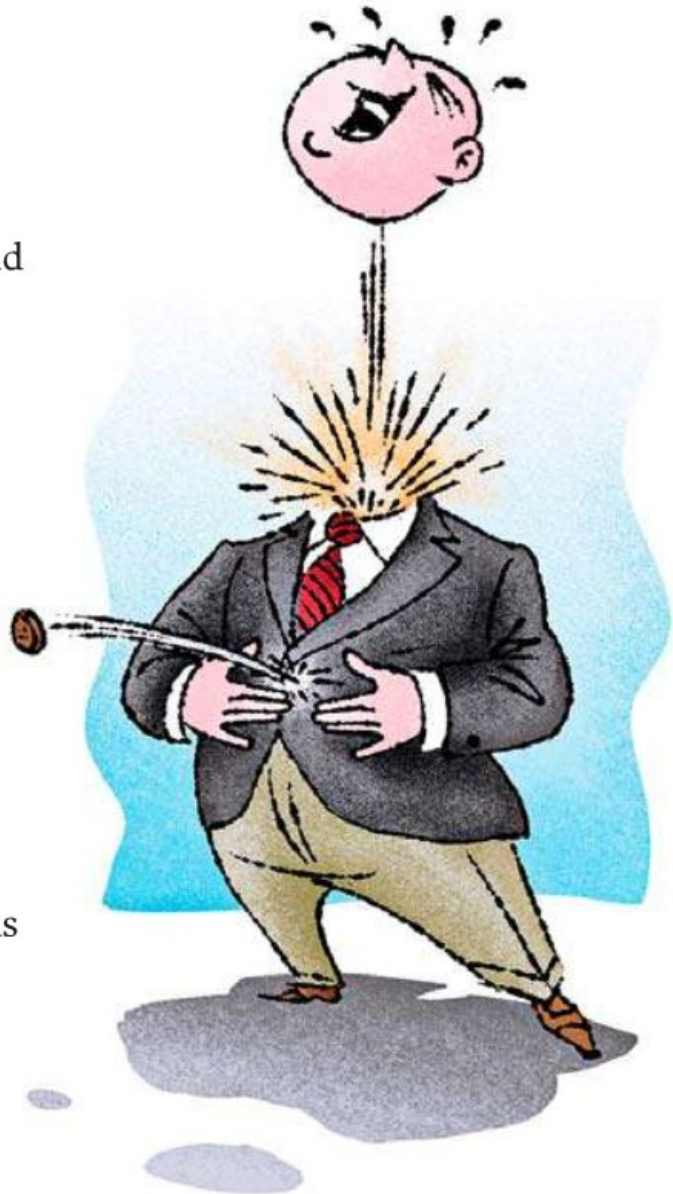
You almost never mean: Orientate
You almost always mean: Orient
Why: *Orientate* is a word, but it means "to face east." "The tour was designed to *orient* new students."

You almost never mean: Impact
You almost always mean: Affect
Why: *Impact* shouldn't be forced into service as a verb. No: "The decision impacts everyone." Yes: "The decision affects everyone."

You never mean: Off of
You always mean: Off
Why: Some words are perfectly fine on their own. "May I bounce an idea off you?"

You almost never mean: In order to
You almost always mean: To
Why: See above.

You never mean: Comprised of
You always mean: Comprises
Why: *Comprises* equals *includes*.



You'd never say "My grocery list includes of milk, eggs, and kiwis." Same goes for *comprises*. (Use *of* with *compose*: "The sculpture is composed of wire hangers.")

You never mean: Everyone has their grammar hang-ups
You always mean: Everyone has his or her grammar hang-ups
Why: *Everyone*, *everybody*, and close cousin *each* are singular, so words that refer to them should also be singular. Or, since we all have our grammar hang-ups, you could just rephrase the sentence. ■

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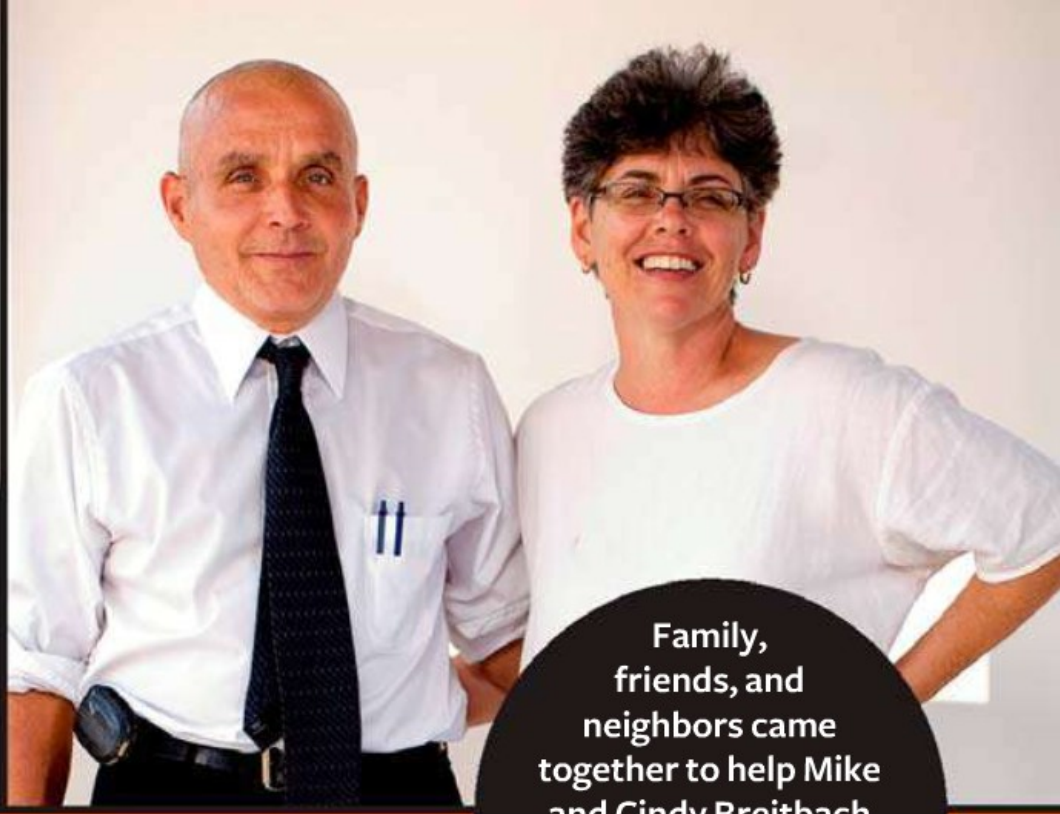
Trial by

A double dose of bad luck brings



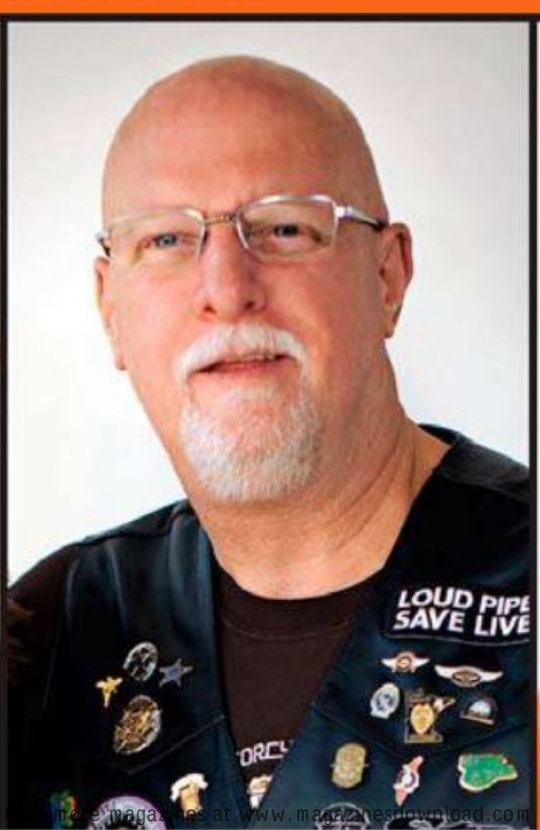
Family, friends, and neighbors came together to help Mike and Cindy Breitbach (above) cope when they lost their business—twice.

Fire

CHRISTOPHER W. DAVIS

out the best in a tiny Iowa town

PHOTOGRAPHED BY DANNY WILCOX FRAZIER/REDUX



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The phone rang at 3:30 a.m. Yanked from sleep in the rainy October predawn, Mike Breitbach fumbled for the receiver. It was Joanie Klein, who lived across from his restaurant, Breitbach's Country Dining, where she had been a cook for four decades. She was crying so hard, she could barely speak.

"What is it, Joanie?" he asked. "What's wrong?"

"Fire. It's on fire!"

"What is?"

"The restaurant. It's burning again!"

Mike's shouts woke the household. "I can't go through this again!" he yelled. "I can't!" He pulled on his clothes and raced down the stairs of his Iowa farmhouse, trailed by his worried wife, Cindy, and the five of their seven adult kids who lived at home and worked at Breitbach's. In the front hall, Mike, 58, doubled over as if he'd been kicked in the stomach.

"Are you okay, Dad?" asked his son Tony, 23. Straightening, Mike nodded tightly, then grabbed the keys to the pickup. The family leaped into the truck and their car and sped to the roadhouse that had borne the Breitbach name for six generations.

The place had burned down once already, only ten months earlier. Hundreds of volunteers from the surrounding communities had donated their time, cash, supplies, and labor to rebuild the local landmark. After it reopened, the diners came back, more of them than ever. But now, as the convoy pulled into Balltown (pop. 58), two miles from the Breitbachs' home, they were met with a nightmarishly familiar scene: firefighters aiming their hoses at flames devouring the white clapboard building.

Climbing out of the pickup, Mike let out another wail. "Not again!"

Then he huddled with his family in the drizzle and helplessly watched the smoke and cinders rise to the sky.

In 1861, Mike's great-great-grandfather, a German pioneer named Jacob Breitbach, bought a stagecoach stop in Balltown. The name Breitbach means "broad stream"; the property, coincidentally, sat on a bluff above the Mississippi River valley, with the great waterway glimmering in the distance.

Of Jacob's 16 children, only Peter stayed behind to run the business, which grew to include a saloon, a general store, and a feed store. At Breitbach's, settlers bought provisions, sold produce, and delivered logs and hogs to be shipped back East. Travelers occasionally bartered for room and board, and some of their trade goods wound up among the bric-a-brac

On previous spread, clockwise from top left: Julie Dupont, kitchen staff; Anne Breitbach, Mike and Cindy's daughter; Skip Breitbach, Mike's brother; Gene Boge, volunteer; Mike and Cindy Breitbach; Mary Beth Theis, Mike's sister; Chuck Jacky, customer; Lynn Davis, cook and waitress; Matt Breitbach, Mike and Cindy's son; Ron Schmitt, volunteer, and his wife, Helen, hostess; Mike Breitbach Jr., Mike and Cindy's son

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Breitbach's Country Dining burned a second time on October 24, 2008.

KORI NEWBY/(DUBUQUE) TELEGRAPH HERALD/AP IMAGES

decorating the walls and rafters: rifles and pistols, a mural by an itinerant artist, a horse blanket that had allegedly belonged to Jesse James.

By the 1950s, lodgings were no longer offered, but a brood of Breitbachs still occupied the upstairs rooms. Mike and his three siblings earned wages waiting tables and selling groceries almost from the moment they could walk. Mike was the oldest and the one everyone turned to. When he was 25, a waitress introduced him to her friend Cindy, a hardworking and sharp-witted country girl. She dropped out of college in 1977 to marry him. The couple bought the business from Mike's parents nine years later and raised their own seven children—now ages 20 to 30—on a farm nearby. By then, the saloon had evolved into a restaurant; in the family tradition, all the kids were eventually on the payroll. Even after college, most of them came back to work at least part-time.

The restaurant's frontier history drew tourists traveling along the Great River Road, the highway that runs along the Mississippi from Minnesota to Louisiana. But it was Cindy's lovingly prepared heartland dishes—fried chicken, mashed potatoes, coconut cream pie—that were the stuff of legend. Mike made an extraordinary host. A compact, vigorous man with a shaved head and piercing blue eyes, he would work the 45-table room, making sure his guests were happy, regaling them with family lore, and turning strangers into friends.

Once, when Mike greeted a regular

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Cindy Breitbach (right) and others hoist doorframes during the second reconstruction.

customer who had just lost her husband, he enveloped her in one of his famous bear hugs. A new patron noted the embrace with interest.

"Say," she asked, "what does a girl have to do to get a hug around here?"

"Come in 12 times," Mike told her. "You get a hug on your 13th visit."

An hour or so later, the woman reappeared. "I'm ready," she said.

"Ready for what, ma'am?"

"My hug. I just walked in and out of your restaurant 12 times."

She got what she came for.

The Breitbachs' generosity was well known. They took meals to the sick and to volunteers repairing tornado-damaged barns. If an elderly Balltowner needed a lawn mowed, Mike's old red pickup would drop by with a squad of his kids. More than once, when crews of Amish carpenters stopped by the restaurant, he tore up their bills, declaring that hardworking folks who contribute to the community deserved a break.

Mike and Cindy's kindness extended to their employees, who repaid them with a fierce loyalty. "You can't beat those people as far as friends go," says their longtime maintenance man, Carlyle Olson, 67. "They'll do anything for you."

The first fire erupted on the morning of Christmas Eve 2007. Balltown was under snow and the restaurant was closed, but preparations were under way for a funeral dinner that afternoon. Mike, his cousin, and three of his sons were there having breakfast before shoveling their neighbors' driveways. In the kitchen, Mike

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smelled gas. He phoned his furnace repairman. Moments later, an explosion burst through the floor from the basement, shattering dishes, launching Mike through the kitchen door and knocking his son Matt, 25, flat on his face. The men fled to the street.

Mike's brother Skip, who ran the feed store across the road, called 911. While waiting for help, Matt shut off the outdoor propane valve, and the group ventured back into the restaurant. Wisps of smoke seeped from the attic vents. They grabbed the 150-year-old Bavarian cuckoo clock, the family portraits, and the original deed. They hauled away the Victorian candy counter, then came back and gathered armloads of antique rifles, milk jugs, and beer steins.

"The Breitbach family has been giving to this community for 150 years," a local declared. "It's time we give back."

The fire, which had been gathering in the walls, began burning through them. Mike's brother refused to quit, even after a deputy put him in a headlock to try to stop him. "I'm rescuing everything I can," Skip said. "If you want to throw me in jail, throw me in jail." The deputy ended up helping.

Within an hour, the whole building was in flames. Mike and Skip stayed until midnight, joined by townspeople even as the windchill fell into the teens. Later, Mike mulled over the situation. The insurance wouldn't be enough to cover the devastation. He was nearing 60, and none of his kids was eager to run the business. Maybe the time had come to walk away. But the older Breitbachs, including Mike's 80-year-old mother, Ruth, urged him to rebuild. His aunt Lollie, 86, told him to hurry up—she planned to have her funeral dinner there.

Over the weeks, the loss was keenly felt in Balltown. Locals held subdued get-togethers at the still-standing wine shed and trellised beer garden: morning coffee, Wednesday night euchre, frontier-style potluck dinners of hog brains, squirrel, and beef tongue. Mike received hundreds of cards and letters from patrons far and wide. Some of the envelopes held checks—one from a retired lawyer and regular customer, John Locher, for $2,500. His note read "The Breitbach family has been giving to this community for 150 years, and it's time the community gives back." Mike scolded Locher for his extravagance and said he would return the gift. "If you don't cash that check," Locher responded, "I'm going to find out where your bank is and make the deposit myself."

Two regular customers who were approaching their 60th wedding anniversary were asked by their children what they wanted for a gift. Money,

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the couple told them. We want to give some to Mike Breitbach so he can put that building back up. Each of their eight kids kicked in $150.

If Mike and Cindy were still on the fence, all doubt was erased on a visit to the family gravesite. While gazing at the tombstones of his forebears who'd almost lost the place during the Great Depression, and of others who'd kept it going through World War II, he realized how close he'd come to having his name and those of his sons and cousin on markers too.

We managed to survive an explosion, he thought. We weren't just lucky—we were blessed. Breitbach's Country Dining is not going to die on my watch.

The community stepped forward with more than money. One farmer offered a pile of walnut lumber that had been drying in his barn for 100 years. An antique restorer and his wife offered to make tables from the planks. An elder of the local Amish commune, Amos Christner, said that he and his carpentry crew would help frame a new building. Christner's relatives in Indiana would make 200 chairs.

Help came from farther away as well. Fifteen years earlier, Don Quinn of Zanesville, Ohio, had run out of gas in Balltown. Mike explained that the next gas station was 17 miles away; he said he had fuel at the farm, though, and asked his son Peter, then 11, to drive Quinn there in the pickup (another Breitbach tradition: driving young). Quinn tried to give Peter $20, but the boy refused. Soon after the fire, Quinn called. "I'm in wholesale plumbing and heating," he said. "Just tell me what you need." About $5,000 worth of equipment arrived free of charge.

When construction began, dozens of volunteers showed up. In just ten weeks, the work was completed, the walls decorated with salvaged artifacts and quilts stitched by supporters. The restaurant reopened on Father's Day weekend, 2008. Busloads of tourists rolled in, along with packs of motorcyclists and many local families. The wait for a table was two hours, but Mike turned on the charm, thanking each person and offering his famous hug. The wait was worth it. Balltown had its heart back.

And just like that, it was taken away again one October night, only four months after the restaurant reopened. The windows glowed orange as the fire spread. This time, everything went up in flames: the family portraits, antique guns, clocks, quilts—every tangible link to the past.

Later that morning, a stunned Mike wandered around the wreckage, oblivious to the cold rain. Even a coincidental phone call from the country's top culinary organization,

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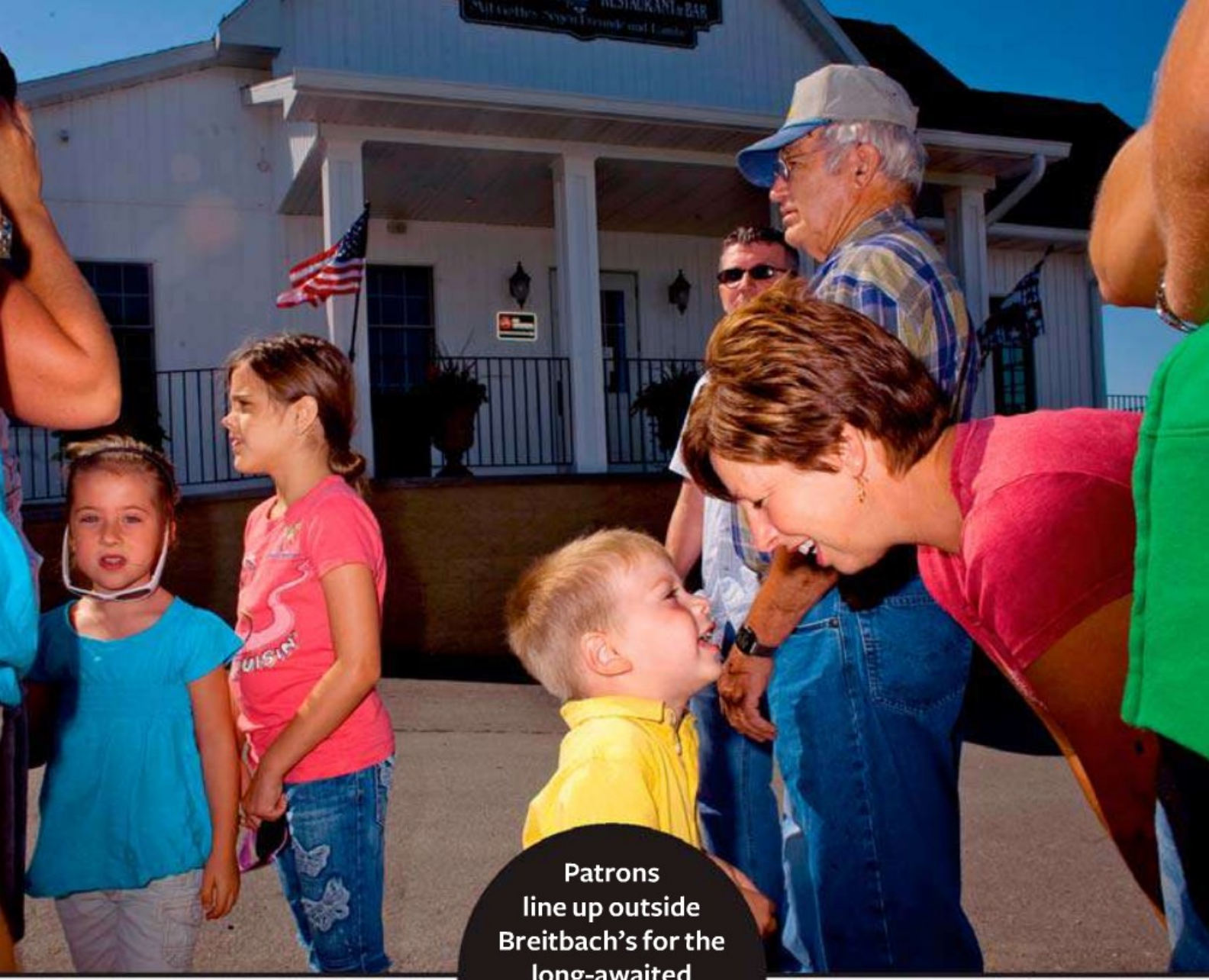

Patrons line up outside Breitbach's for the long-awaited reopening on August 1, 2009.

the James Beard Foundation, which had announced Breitbach's as the winner of an America's Classics Award, hardly registered. "I don't exactly have a restaurant anymore," Mike told the caller, then turned back to the group of devastated neighbors and friends who had joined him at the site. We'll build it again, they assured him. Just give us the word.

This time, though, it was different. The cause of this blaze was a mystery; the building had burned so thoroughly that most evidence had been destroyed. The fire might have been sparked by an electrical glitch, officials said, but there were more sinister possibilities too. "Is anyone mad at you?" investigators asked Mike. "Have you fired anybody?" And most upsetting: "Did you set the fire yourself?" Mike assured them that none of these suggestions were true.

Still, he couldn't shake the feeling that someone had torched the place. Many people in Balltown wondered the same thing. A jealous local, some thought. Cindy scoffed at that idea: "Jealous of what? Of 20-hour days and piles of bills and putting off fam-

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Ball-town mayor Herb Sigwarth celebrates with other customers at Breitbach's.

ily vacations so you can be open for the holidays?" But Mike thought it unwise to rebuild with an arsonist potentially lurking.

Amos Christner argued differently: "Balltown will die without Breitbach's," he said. Again, sympathy cards and letters poured in—even more than last time.

Mike and Cindy debated what to do. They knew their decision would have to be built on more than good business sense; they had to consider the folks who got the place back on its feet the first time. "We owe these people so much," Cindy said. "If we don't rebuild, it will be a slap in the face to them, like saying everything they did had no meaning."

At Christmastime, the couple called a family conference. All the kids came to the farmhouse. Mike and Cindy began by noting that state officials had closed their investigation, declaring that the cause of the second fire was "undetermined." It was likely that the mystery would never be solved. "The question is," Mike said, "do we start over anyway?"

Betsy Breitbach Septer, 30—the eldest child and a physical therapist in Omaha—said, "I don't want to believe there's someone out there who would do such a thing. But even if there is, we've got to be as strong as we can be." The vote was unanimous: Breitbach's would rise again.

Along with new donors, almost everyone who had chipped in the first time did so once more. Virgil and Mary Hermsen built yet another batch of

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tables. The Amish group made more chairs. Ron Schmitt cut two-by-fours. Gene Boge was there every day, doing whatever grunt work was needed. The waitresses hauled shingles and cement, and the local ladies took food to the volunteers and started new quilts to hang on the walls.

In May, as the structure took shape, Mike and Cindy flew to New York City with two of the kids and a couple of the restaurant's employees to collect their James Beard award. The ceremony was held at Lincoln Center, and they mingled backstage with celebrity chefs and Hollywood stars. They visited the Statue of Liberty, the Empire State Building, and Ellis Island, where they searched unsuccessfully for Jacob Breitbach's name in the archives. "It gave me goose bumps to think about all the hardships he went through to get here," Mike recalls, "and all the things he brought over that are now lost."

Last August 1, Mike led a priest through the building to bless each room. Then a small crowd collected in the parking lot for speeches by U.S. senator Chuck Grassley, Balltown mayor Herb Sigwarth, and Mike himself, who invited everyone on a tour. The new layout improved on the old place: A sprinkler system had been installed, and the dining room doubled in size. Cindy's kitchen had also been enlarged to 1,200 square feet.

These days, she's at the stove six days a week, making her crisp chicken and sumptuous pies, while Mike walks the dining room just as before. He often thinks of something that football coach Vince Lombardi said: "It's not whether you get knocked down; it's whether you get up." Mike found the quotation in a supporter's note, which he carried in his pocket for weeks after the first fire.

"We were knocked down once, and we got up," Mike says. "Then we were knocked way, way down, and now we're getting back up again. We're survivors. A fire can destroy a lot, but not what you are."

EMBRACEABLE YOU

Are you a bro hugger, a man who hugs other men? We have two words for you: *stop* and *it*. Here's a handy list for when you're not sure whether a guy-to-guy clutch is appropriate:

Hug Me	**Don't Hug Me**
I return from combat	I spring for lunch
Someone dies	I get a hit in softball
I earn a degree	I get over a cold
I go into surgery	I get blackjack

From *Don't Be That Guy* by *Colin Nissan* and *Sean Farrell* (Three Rivers Press)

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ATTACK OF THE LATE-NITE TV

Our annual ★★★★ ratings of the gadgets

There I was, parked in front of the TV set at 2:30 in the morning, eating a Suzy Q and watching a rerun of *WKRP in Cincinnati*, when an infomercial about a little egglike device that scrapes away foot calluses cut in. I was simultaneously engrossed and grossed out by the image of discarded foot shavings, and then a thought crossed my mind: I need a PedEgg! Then another: I don't think I can finish my Suzy Q.

Thus began my bizarre odyssey into the wonderful, wacky, weird, "What the ...?" world of the infomercial—the official domain of the "Why didn't I think of that?" product. After maxing out my credit card on stuff that my wife politely dubbed questionable, I discovered that some were shoddy, some were enticing but just missed the mark, and others? Well, simply put, they were brilliant!

To make sure you know which is which, *Reader's Digest* staffers joined me in testing and rating As Seen on TV products, ranking them on the following scale:

★ Don't waste your money
★★ Works, sort of
★★★ Good enough to buy
★★★★ Overnight delivery!

So don't reach for that phone until you've read what we have to say.

PEDIPAWS

$19.99 + $7.99 S&H ★★

What the company says: "The fast, easy, gentle" way to trim your pet's

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GIZMOS!

sold on TV

BY ANDY SIMMONS

Bark *plus* bite: PediPaws scared every dog we used it on.

ILLUSTRATED BY DAVID GOLDIN; (PRODUCTS) PHOTOGRAPHED BY JEREMY LIPS

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nails. PediPaws is a battery-operated, motorized emery board that sands down puppy's nails "without the pain caused by traditional nail clippers."

What we say: It's great if you're trying to scare the hell out of your pet—the noisy motor frightened every dog we used it on. "My older dog wouldn't let me near him with it," said one pet owner. Another wasn't too embarrassed to admit that her dog's a screamer, and "she yelped when I tried it on her." Those dogs are all a bunch of wusses, charged a third pet owner, who swears by PediPaws. "My dog put up a fuss at first," she conceded, "but then gave up when I said, 'Be a good girl if you want a treat.' Food motivates her."

GREENWASH BALL

$29.95 + $9.95 S&H ★★★

What the company says: Toss out the laundry detergent! The GreenWash Ball cleans clothes "by bouncing around natural ceramics inside the ball that raise the pH level of the water." The texturing on the ball helps loosen dirt and at the same time softens clothes without the use of chemical fabric softeners.

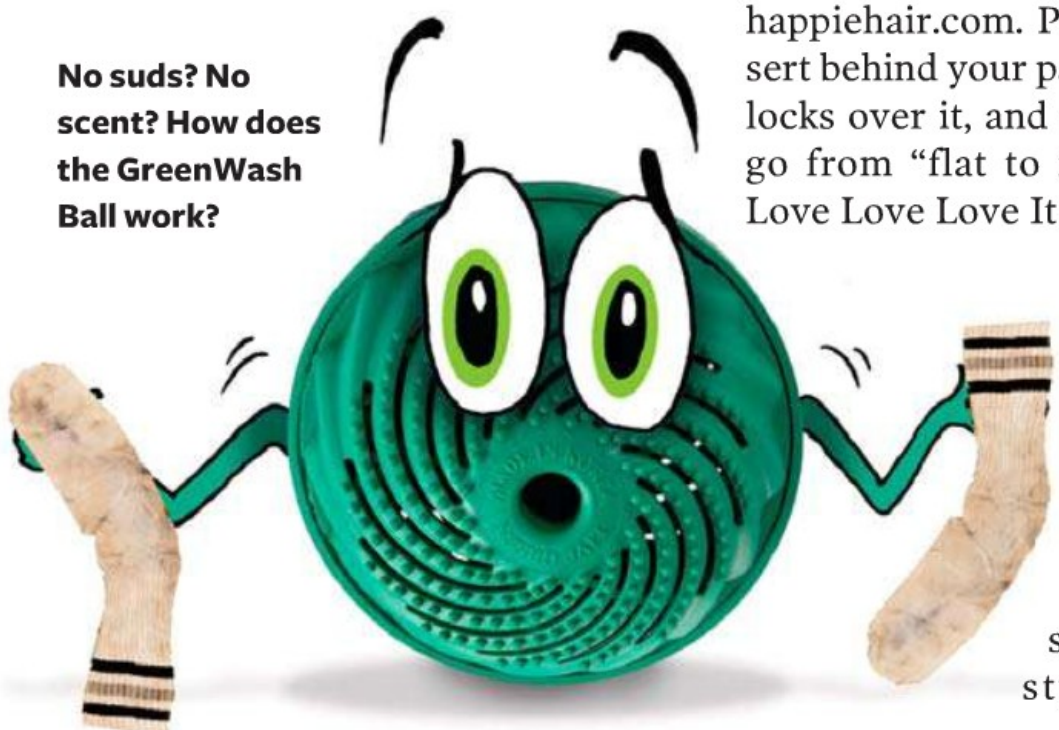
What we say: "I'm not sure it cleaned my clothes," said one confused launderer. "I mean, it might have, but I'm not sure." That's because the GreenWash Ball doesn't use sudsy detergent to clean clothes, just friction, and that means no fresh scent. Suds or no suds, another tester is hooked. "It's easy to use, and my clothes were clean. Best of all, it will save me the trouble of getting to the laundry room and discovering, Oh, #%^$! I'm out of detergent!

BUMPITS VOLUMIZING HAIR INSERTS

$9.99 + $7.95 S&H for a set of four ★

What the company says: The website's URL speaks volumes: big happiehair.com. Place a Bumpits insert behind your part line, drape your locks over it, and watch your hairdo go from "flat to fabulous! Women Love Love Love It!!!"

What we say: The women *they* know may love, love, love it, but not the women *we* know. "Not sure when this hairstyle came back in style," wondered



No suds? No scent? How does the GreenWash Ball work?

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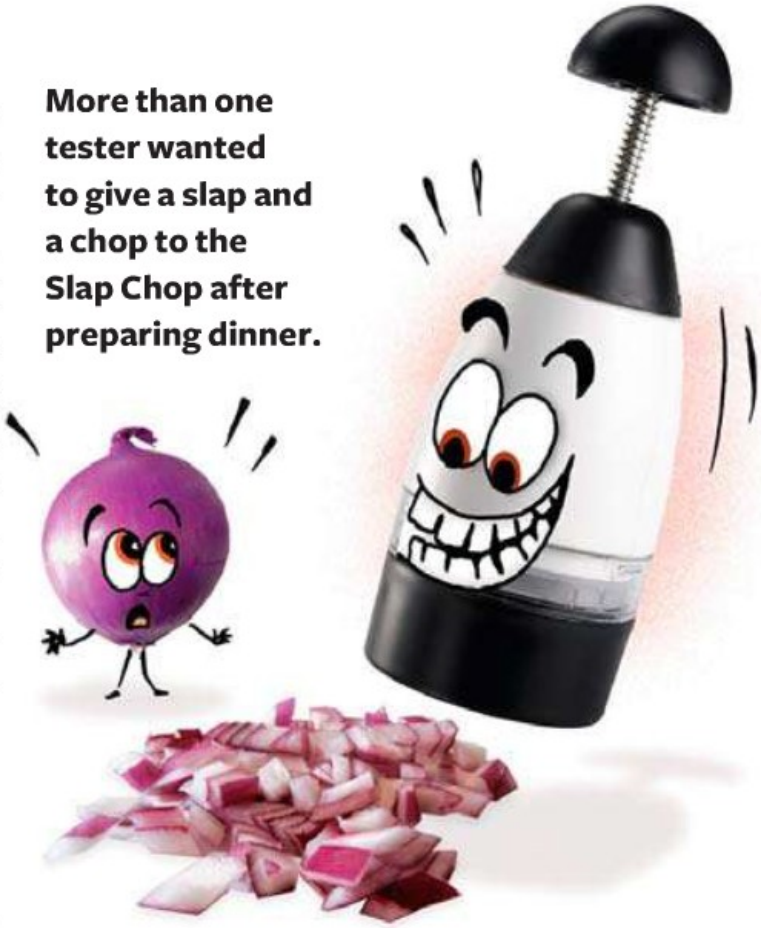
one member of the flat-hair society. Plus, "when you put in two at a time, they look like devil horns." Another tester pointed out that "despite all the teasing and hair spraying, I couldn't get my hair to camouflage the comb." But if you insist on sporting the Sarah Palin do, stick with the shorter Bumpits. "The large ones give you a strangely elongated head, similar to the aliens' in *Mars Attacks!*" said a researcher. Added another, "I'm tall enough. I don't need an extra five inches of hair."



More than one tester wanted to give a slap and a chop to the Slap Chop after preparing dinner.

SLAP CHOP

$19.95 + $7.95 S&H ★

What the company says: "Dice, chop, and mince" your veggies, nuts, and fruits in seconds with this compact kitchen tool. Just place your victims on a cutting board and cover them with the Slap Chop, and after a few whacks of the plunger, the deed is done. It even "separates outer skin from onions." And it's so simple, "you can do it with a finger." Best of all, it's "easy to clean."

What we say: It is easy to clean, and that's good, since "everything I tried to chop jammed up the blades on the first pass," said one disgruntled tester. And it's not much of a timesaving device, since vegetables need to be prechopped before you use the chopper. As for separating onions from their skin, "it got stuck," carped another. But what about the "you can chop with a finger" claim? King Kong's finger, maybe. Lamented one tester, "After a few hard slaps, my entire hand was sore."

DEBBIE MEYER GREEN BAGS

GOTTA HAVE IT!

$9.95 + $6.95 S+H for 20 bags ★★★★

What the company says: Fruits, vegetables, and cut flowers stay fresh longer inside these reusable bags. How? They're "made with a natural mineral that absorbs and removes the ethylene gas"—released by apples, peppers, and the like—"that causes normal deterioration."

What we say: Vegetarians, rejoice! "I put yellow, ripe bananas in the green bags, and a week later, they still hadn't turned brown," said one daiquiri lover. Now, it's hard to believe that a green bag can do all of this, but

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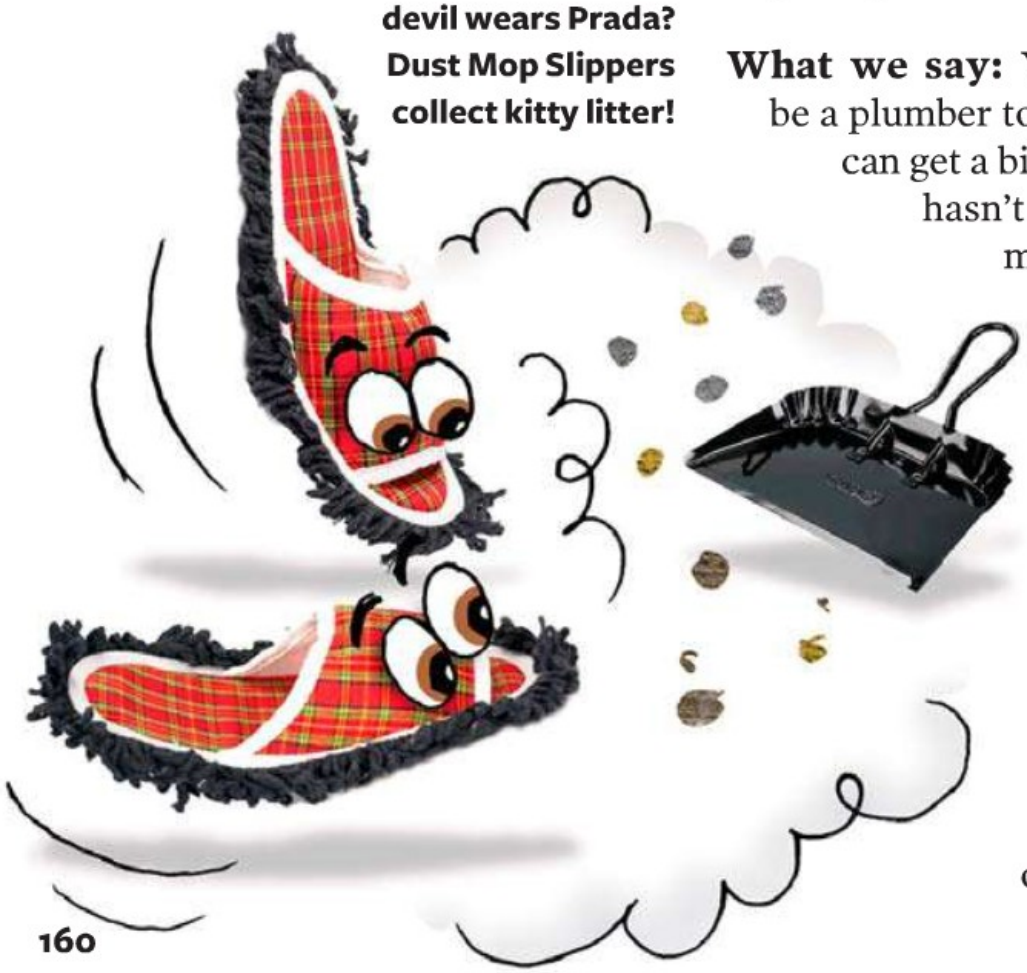
even a skeptic was convinced: "Cut veggies were still fresh five days later." Thanks to the savings on food, another added, the bags are a "good value."

DUST MOP SLIPPERS

$4.95 + $6.99 S&H ★★★

What the company says: Dust while you walk in these plaid, open-toe slippers with a dust mop sole. They're one-size-fits-all and machine washable, and they "pick up dirt, dust, and pet hair as you slide across the floor."

What we say: The prince wouldn't have scoured his kingdom for Cinderella if she'd worn these "dorky-looking" slippers to the ball, insisted one fashionista. But if he were doing the cleaning up afterward, he might don a pair himself. While they're useless against "grit or big pieces of dirt, they're fine for quick general floor dusting," said one potential rug shopper. In fact, a happy feline owner chimed in, "they actually collected cat hair and stray pieces of litter." Dorkiness quotient aside, our first tester liked that they were "comfortable."



Who cares if the devil wears Prada? Dust Mop Slippers collect kitty litter!

PROCAULK

GOTTA HAVE IT!

$19.95 + $5.95 S&H ★★★★

What the company says: "ProCaulk is the only hassle-free way to caulk bathrooms and kitchens with no mess and a perfect finish every time." The kit comes with a tube of caulk, an edger to cut out old grout, and tools with different shapes and sizes to smooth out the new seal on "any edge, any corner, any joint."

What we say: You don't have to be a plumber to love it. Although it can get a bit messy—after all, it hasn't eliminated the human element that can dribble sealant all over the tub—"it does what it's supposed to," said one happy grouter. Another tester was spotted walking off with a couple of kits. It's high praise when things get stolen from our offices.

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BOTTLE TOPS

$10 + $6.99 S&H for six ★★

What the company says: "Turn your favorite canned drink into a bottle" with these plastic bottle tops that snap onto most cans. Doing so "prevents bugs from crawling into your drink, keeps your beverage carbonated, and prevents spills."

What we say: The Bottle Top is a hassle to snap on and off. "I spent five minutes fighting with it," complained one testy tester. Other reviewers refrigerated their bottle-topped cans and returned a day or two later to a fizzless soda. "I wasted half a can of Coke—and there's nothing worse than a flat Coke!" one whined. But another tester did spot some upsides through her rose-colored glasses: "No spills, and they come in cute colors!" And that, after all, is what's really important.

SHAMWOW!

GOTTA HAVE IT!

$19.95 + $7.95 S&H for two large ShamWows and two mini ShamWows ★★★★

What the company says: "You'll be saying wow every time you use this towel." That's because the ShamWow "holds 12 times its weight in liquid and easily removes cola, wine, and pet stains, and washes, dries, and polishes any surface. It's machine washable and lasts ten years," says the product's rapid-fire pitchman, Vince Shlomi.

The latest in soda-can haute couture, Bottle Tops still left our users fizzless.

What we say: Vince knows his rags! "I loved it," raved a reviewer. "It really works—soaks up spills superfast. I want ShamWow! I need it, my friends need it, my family needs it!" Less stimulated reviewers also noted that it did a good job sopping up spills on carpets.

WEARABLE TOWEL

$19.95 + $7.95 S&H ★

What the company says: The scene is a public swimming pool. You've just emerged from the water and want to cover up. A robe is too heavy, and your towel keeps falling off. The solution: a towel with arm openings! For you voguers, it can be worn tunic- or toga-style. And it's so attractive, it's "perfect to wear with family and friends."

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WHAT'S UP WITH THE SHIPPING & HANDLING?

Have you noticed the shipping and handling charges tacked onto all these TV treasures? For many companies, those easily ignored fees are a gold mine. Just ask Buck Smolow, a disgruntled consumer. An infomercial for the Magic Jack, a gadget that promises ultra-cheap phone service by plugging it into your computer, persuaded him to purchase a pair. He paid $39.95 plus $6.95 shipping and handling for each one, bringing the total to $93.80. "From running my own e-commerce business, I know that sometimes products can't be shipped together," he says. His mood changed when the two items arrived in one package, although he'd paid postage for two. Even with the gadgets bundled together, the postage should have been $4.95. The handling, of course, is open to interpretation. When Amazon ships you a couple of books, for instance, it often sends them together, charging one fee for postage and 99 cents per item. Smolow was disappointed with the Magic Jacks, so he returned them. He got a full refund but had to pay to send them back. Magic Jack kept the shipping and handling fees.

It's called shipping *and* handling for a reason, says Steve Dworman, a direct TV marketing expert. Unlike mammoth Amazon, with its own warehouses, call centers, etc., infomercial marketers use shipping and handling fees to hire outside companies to fulfill those needs. "So even when the customer is given a bonus 'free' product, the marketer has to pay all these people," he says. But shouldn't that cost be part of the price and not a tacked-on surprise? "In an ideal world," he concedes, "people aren't supposed to make a profit off shipping and handling." *Tara Conry*

What we say: It's a bold fashion statement, all right—one that screams, I'm a doofus! Said one modest tester, "If you were self-conscious at the beach, this product is not going to boost your self-esteem." Another suggested this improvement: "They would be onto something if they would just get rid of those armholes." Of course, in that case, it would have a different name: towel. And "a pretty flimsy" one at that, added a third reviewer.

FUZZY WUZZY MICROFIBER BLIND CLEANER

$4.95 + $5.99 S&H ★★★★

What the company says: "Fuzzy Wuzzy Microfiber Blind Cleaner is the easiest way to keep your mini blinds clean and dust-free." It has three chenille-wrapped "finger pads" that reach in through the slats, acting as if they were "magnetically charged to attract negatively charged dust particles."

What we say: We here at *Reader's Digest* were English majors, so we don't know from negatively charged dust particles. But we can wax rhapsodic on clean blinds, and we did. "Before using it, I assumed my blinds were a mottled gray-black-bluish. I was surprised to discover they're white," said a reviewer. "I liked that you could wipe three rows at a time," agreed another duster. "But," she warns, "it can buckle lightweight blinds." ■

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A divorced father converts to Judaism and wants his nine-year-old son circumcised. The mother says no way. Now what?

You Be the Judge

BY VICKI GLEMBOCKI

Lia Boldt couldn't believe what her son was telling her: His father was taking him to a doctor the next day—to be circumcised.

She knew that her ex-husband, James Boldt, had recently converted to Judaism. She knew that their nine-year-old son, raised in the Russian Orthodox Church, had been taking classes at the synagogue in Lacey, Washington, where he lived with his father, who had custody. She even knew that her son might be circumcised if he converted as well, since circumcision, traditionally, is obligatory for Jewish males.

What Lia didn't know—what she said she was hearing for the first time in May 2004—was that her son didn't want to be circumcised and was afraid to tell his father. She had to act fast.

The next day, she filed for a temporary restraining order against her

ILLUSTRATED BY JON KRAUSE

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The procedure could have "grave and drastic consequences," the mother said.

ex-husband to prevent the circumcision. She got it, then filed a motion to keep James from having the boy circumcised at all, and another to have custody switched to her.

She'd appealed for a change in custody before, but this time, the case would travel all the way to the supreme court of Oregon, the state where she lived.

Since their divorce in 1999, when their son was four, the Boldts had battled over who should be the primary caregiver. First it was Lia. Then in 2002, the court gave James sole custody because it determined that Lia's attitude toward James was turning the boy against his father. Lia's appeals were still awaiting court review when she filed the request to block the circumcision.

James, insisting that his son did want the procedure, submitted an affidavit from the boy's doctor in support of his claim. James also argued that stopping him from having his son circumcised violated his own religious rights.

The trial court ruled that decisions regarding elective surgery rest, as they always have, with the custodial parent—in this case, James Boldt. Still, the court barred the circumcision from taking place until the prior custody appeals were resolved.

Lia wasn't satisfied. She thought the procedure could have "grave and drastic consequences," both physically and emotionally. So she appealed again, and the case made its way to the state supreme court in November 2007. This time, both Boldts brought reinforcements.

James arrived in the courtroom with representatives from the American Jewish Congress, the

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Anti-Defamation League, and the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America. Their brief argued that a parent can't lose custody just because he decided to have his child circumcised for religious reasons—and, furthermore, that a custodial parent is in fact obligated to make medical and religious choices for a child.

"The father's decision can't be trumped by the mother not liking it," says Steve Freeman, legal affairs director for the Anti-Defamation League. "That would overturn a custody system in our nation that is long-standing and stable." If Lia Boldt received custody on her claims, he argued, the courts would soon be clogged with battles over ear piercing and tonsil removal.

But what about the boy? Lia's brief was accompanied by one prepared by Doctors Opposing Circumcision, which argued that her ex-husband's religious rights shouldn't outweigh his son's inalienable rights. "The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that parents can't use their belief system to endanger or cause pain to a child," says John Geisheker, the group's executive director, who said the circumcision should wait until the boy turns 18 and can choose for himself.

Should the decision wait that long? Or should the father's or mother's wishes prevail before then?

The Verdict

Throughout five years of deliberations—with many affidavits, briefs, and claims from both parents about their son's wishes—the boy was never questioned, not even in a judge's private chambers. The Oregon Supreme Court ruled that he didn't need to wait until age 18 to make up his mind. It decided that the 14-year-old should be asked now what he wants.

Last April, at a hearing in the judge's chambers of the Jackson County Circuit Court, the boy finally spoke for himself: He did *not* want to be circumcised. He also said he didn't want to convert to Judaism, was afraid to tell his father how he felt, and was even afraid to continue living with him. It took five more months to resolve the custody issue, but finally, in September, the judge approved a settlement that James proposed and Lia accepted: The Boldts will have joint custody, with Lia as the primary parent and James receiving visitation. The main factor in their agreement: their son's preference.

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An Animal's Instinct

Can a cat really know which patients are about to die?

BY DAVID DOSA, MD

FROM *MAKING ROUNDS WITH OSCAR*

PHOTOGRAPHED BY JASON GROW

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Nine lives and a sixth sense: Oscar turns up when patients and their families at Steere House need him most.

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He was just an ordinary black-and-white tabby, adopted from an animal shelter. Oscar was one of six cats that lived at the Steere House Nursing & Rehabilitation Center on the Rhode Island Hospital grounds in downtown Providence, where I work as a geriatrician for patients with advanced forms of dementia. In the beginning, he wasn't chummy with the staff or the patients. He was the kind of cat that hid under the bed or stared out the window for hours on end. So most everybody took notice—eventually even me—when he began padding down the halls making house calls to one ailing resident or another.

The third floor of Steere House is often the final stop for my patients. Many of them have forgotten almost everything they knew. They seldom remember the year they were married or the names of their children. They don't know how they made a living or where they were when Neil Armstrong landed on the moon. But they enjoy having the cats around—a love of animals seems to be among the last things to go. You could even say that in small ways, pets connect people to the lives they used to lead and the world they've mostly left behind.

Since I'm the last doctor my patients see, it's my job to take care of all their medical needs, to ease their pain, and to make them comfortable. That's a job I take seriously, which is why Oscar eventually won me over.

"David, do you have a few minutes?" Mary Miranda asked me. "I want to show you something in room 310."

As the day-shift nurse on our third-floor unit and a longtime employee, Mary was the source of all knowledge at Steere and fiercely protective of her "children." As we walked down the hallway together, she began to tell me the story of Lilia Davis.

"She's 80 now and has been here for 18 months," said Mary. "Recently, she started losing weight. One morning, she started to bleed. We sent her to the hospital, and the doctors diagnosed colon cancer; it had spread everywhere. Given her severe dementia, her family decided not to treat the cancer. They sent her back to us on hospice services."

That sounded reasonable. We got to Mrs. Davis's room. She was lying on her back, her eyes closed, her breathing shallow. A morphine pump was connected to her arm by an IV. On the other side of the room was an empty cot. Judging by the rumpled sheets on that bed, I figured someone had been sleeping there recently.

"Mrs. Davis's daughter," Mary said

David Dosa, MD, a geriatrician since 2003, lives in Barrington, Rhode Island. (He has changed most of the names here for privacy.)

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before I could ask. "I sent her home for a few hours to shower and change. She'd been here for 36 hours straight."

"What did you want to show me?" I asked.

Mary pointed to Mrs. Davis's bed. "Take a look."

As I stepped closer, Oscar raised his head from where he lay nestled against Mrs. Davis's leg. The bell on his collar jingled slightly, and his ears perked up; he glanced at me with questioning eyes. I ignored him and moved toward Mrs. Davis. Oscar put his head back down on his front paws and purred softly.

I looked at the patient's face. She seemed comfortable. "Do you need an order for medication or anything?" I asked.

"It's not the patient I wanted you to see, David," said Mary. "It's the cat."

"The cat?"

"Yes."

Truth be told, I had no use for cats, due perhaps to an unfortunate childhood relationship with a hostile cat my grandmother had owned. But I knew how devoted many of the staff members and residents were to the Steere House cats. Our nursing facility had brought in the cats to make the place more homelike. On any given afternoon, our lobby was bright with sunshine and filled with the music of a player piano—and at least two cats could be found rolling and playing there like happy kids.

"Okay. So the cat's hanging out with a patient," I responded, a little impatiently.

"Well, that's just it," Mary said calmly. "Oscar doesn't really like to hang out with people."

It was true: I'd seen him only a few times in the hallways. His usual spot was by his food and water bowls at the third-floor entrance, where he was often curled up asleep on an old blanket under the desk.

"He's probably here because he found someone who won't bother him," I said.

"Maybe he likes patients who are dying because they don't give him any trouble," I said.

"David, lately a couple of us have noticed that Oscar has been spending a lot of time with certain residents."

I shrugged.

Then Mary added, "He gets close only to patients who are about to die."

I looked over at Lilia Davis and realized that, sadly, she might indeed pass away today. But that wasn't Mary's point. "Yesterday, Oscar wandered into another patient's room right before she passed away," she said. The look on my face must have said enough because Mary stopped talking. For a brief moment, we

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both observed the scene in front of us.

"Don't get me wrong, Mary," I began again. "I love the concept of an animal sitting with me as I die. It's really quite sweet."

I walked over to the bed and reached down to pet Oscar. A paw flew out toward me, and I snatched my hand back.

"Maybe he just likes patients who are dying because they don't give him any trouble," I said ruefully.

She gave me an indulgent look. "I think there's something more to it, David."

As I crossed town on the way to my outpatient clinic a short time later, my mind wandered back to the cat I had known years before, the one who had lived at my grandmother's cottage. His name was Puma, appropriately so. In my memory, he was a 30-pound behemoth (as any fisherman will tell you, size grows with time), and he glared and hissed every time I visited the house. I reassured myself that considering the past, I was not irrational about cats.

That's when my cell phone rang.

I picked it up and heard Mary's voice. "David, Mrs. Davis died a few minutes after you left."

I sucked in a breath. It had been less than an hour since I had been standing in Mrs. Davis's room, watching her sleeping form. Even after all these years in my line of work, I still felt humility from being so close to death.

We talked over the details, and then I said, "Look, Mary, don't make too much of this cat business. The fact is that Mrs. Davis had two dreadful diagnoses."

"Yes, she did," Mary said. "But this is happening with some regularity. It's pretty much happening every time someone dies. Some of the residents' families are starting to talk about it." She was quiet, then added, "I really think Oscar knows."

Several weeks later, Mary called me to report the unfortunate news that another dementia patient had passed away.

"And just like all the other times," Mary said, "Oscar was at her bedside." The staff calculated that this was probably the 12th visit to a dying patient that this mysterious cat had made since his unusual behavior came to light.

In fact, the timing of this particular patient's death was surprising. There had been no indication that she was terminally ill. Aside from her dementia, she had been an advertisement for good health.

My faith in science and my own intellectual vanity led me to reject the notion that some four-legged feline possessed special powers. As a researcher, I'd been taught to consider facts dispassionately—to analyze them, form theories, and poke holes in them until new theories arose that were closer to the truth. From a scientific point of view, it seemed

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Geriatrician Dosa with Oscar. "I learned to watch him and to listen to him," says the doctor.

ludicrous that a cat could predict human death. It was much easier to say that Oscar was drawn to warm, quiet beds—cats sleep two thirds of the time anyway, right?

Still, there was a plausible biological explanation for the "sweet smell of death," which was perhaps what Oscar had sensed. As cells die, carbohydrates are degraded into many different oxygenated compounds, including various types of ketones—chemical mixtures known for their fragrant aroma. Ketones are also found in abundance in untreated diabetics, and in medical school,

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we were taught to sniff a diabetic's breath to determine whether sugar levels are high. Could it be that Oscar simply smelled an elevated level of a chemical compound released prior to death?

It's certainly clear that many animals' sense of smell is far superior to humans'. A 2006 study, published in a leading cancer journal, suggested dogs could be trained to identify microscopic quantities of certain biochemicals excreted by cancer cells. Other studies have identified melanoma-sniffing dogs, not to mention reports of earthquake-predicting fish.

"Where is the cat now?" I asked Mary, coming out of my reverie.

"He's still in your patient's room on her bed," she said, adding that the woman's daughter was in there too. I thought of a well-known quote: "A coincidence is God's way of remaining anonymous." I was strangely elated by the idea that Oscar's presence at my patient's deathbed might have a deeper meaning.

This time, I had lots of questions. I grabbed my coat and headed over to Steere House.

As I got off the elevator on the third floor, I stepped directly into an intense conversation between several people at the desk. It was about Oscar.

"So he did it again," I said.

"Yes, he did," said Lisa, the hospice nurse. "This cat has quite a talent."

Down the hall in the room, I found Kathy Jones holding her mother's hand and crying quietly. Oscar lay sprawled on the bed, his front and hind legs extended, his spine resting gently against the woman's leg. The daughter turned to greet me. She rose to give me a hug.

"I'm sorry," I said.

I felt her warm tears through my shirt. Her eyes were bloodshot and swollen. I searched for something to say, but Kathy broke the silence.

"Dr. Dosa, I want to thank you for everything you've done for my mother."

She wiped her eyes and sat back down near the bed. The movement stirred Oscar, who blinked and looked at Kathy.

"Can you believe this cat?" she asked.

"I heard he was here when your mom died," I replied gently.

Through her tears, she smiled. "Yeah, he and I are buddies now," she said. She reached over to pet him on the head. Oscar accepted the attention and nuzzled Kathy's hand. "He's a really special cat," she added.

I said a private goodbye to my patient. Oscar continued to sit there and purr. Finally, after several minutes, I asked the question I'd been contemplating during the last hour.

"Kathy, how did you feel about Oscar being here at your mother's passing?"

She looked at me. "Dr. Dosa, Oscar is my angel. He was here for my mother and me. With Oscar at my side, I felt a little less alone."

So this cat was not only a harbinger of death but also a comforter during

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tough times for both patients and family members. It was eye-opening.

A few days later, I found Mary seated at the nurses desk on the third floor, brushing Oscar. Sprawled out in full glory, he looked like a boxer after a major bout.

"The man of the hour," I announced.

Mary smiled. "The last couple of days, Oscar has seemed pretty beat from his vigil."

"Sure, sleeping on a bed is really hard work," I said jokingly.

I was finishing my examination of a patient a little while later when I felt another presence in the room. I looked down: Oscar was sitting on the floor, watching me intently.

"Hey, you," I said. "Are you making rounds with me now?"

I reached over and offered my hand. Oscar sniffed it intently, then stood up to move toward me, allowing me to gently scratch him behind the ears. Then he leaped onto my lap and sat down, eyeing me.

"So what do you think?" I asked him, nodding toward the patient.

For a second, Oscar looked over at my patient as if he were assessing the situation. He leaped onto the arm of the recliner and sniffed the air. Finally, he jumped down and scampered out of the room. It occurred to me that I had just received a second opinion from a cat.

Returning to the front desk, I found Mary writing in a chart. "I've just been on rounds with Oscar," I said.

"So are you a believer now?" she asked.

"I wouldn't go that far," I said. I advanced my theory that Oscar could smell some chemical process that we cannot.

Mary shrugged. "Perhaps when people show unusual interest in a patient, he wants to be part of the team," she said.

"Dr. Dosa, it looks like you're starting to take our cat more seriously," said Mary.

"But that still doesn't explain why he's sometimes the first to enter a room whenever a patient is dying," I responded.

Mary offered a hint of a smile. "Dr. Dosa, it looks like you're starting to take our cat more seriously."

I threw up my hands. "Who knows, Mary? I'm still a scientist at heart. I've always been taught to look dispassionately at the facts."

"So do some investigating," she said reasonably. "You're a researcher. Talk to some of the family members of patients who died on Oscar's watch. See what they have to say."

To satisfy my curiosity, I did just as she suggested. Over the next few months, I spoke to half a dozen fam-

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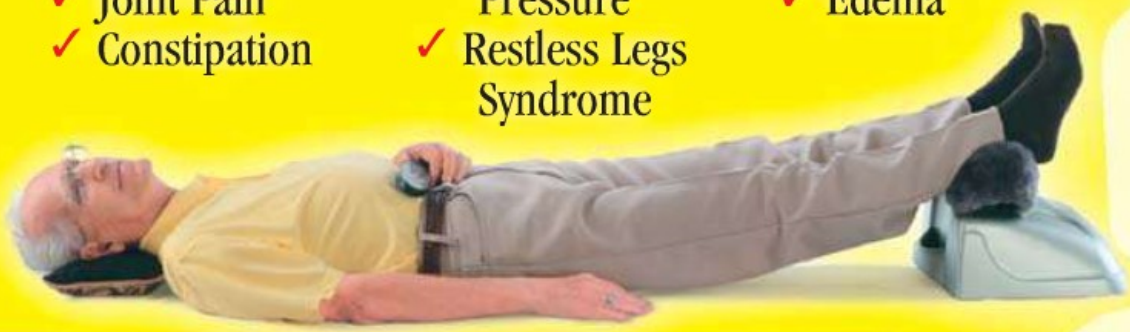

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Customer Letters

I have had such lower back pain that I could hardly stand it. I saw your ad two years ago and thought it wouldn't help me. But, I ordered one anyway. I have used it for four months now. I have very little back pain, am more regular, and I sleep much better thanks to the Exerciser 2000. —*C. Cordes*

Little did I know when I ordered the Exercise 2000 Elite® that it would prove valuable to my wife of 62 years. I got it for the stiffness in my legs and it works perfectly to get me loosened up after playing tennis in the morning. When I come home I immediately get on the Exerciser 2000 Elite® for ten minutes and I feel great! My wife suffers from restless leg syndrome at night. Instead of walking the floor for a long period of time, she just gets on the Exerciser for ten minutes and the symptoms subside. After wrestling with restless legs for a long time she is all smiles in the morning. Happy days are here again! Just thought you would like to know. —*Dick P.*

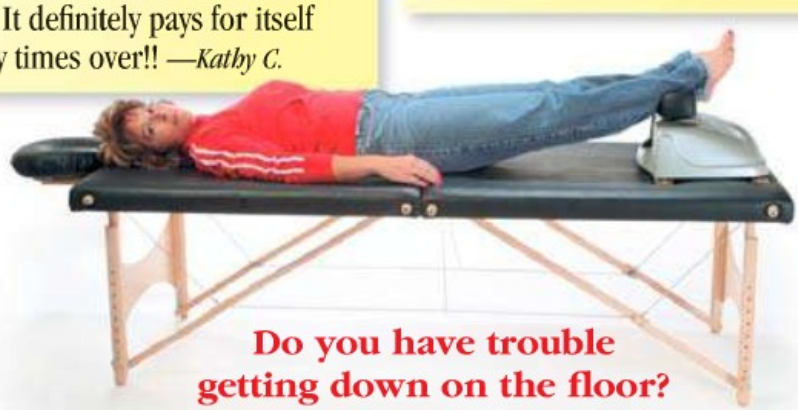
I am 76 years old, heavy, stiff with arthritis and a leukemic for the past nine years. Using your machine twice a day has made me feel ten years younger. I also have a great deal more energy. When you say that your company is in the business of "helping people feel better", it is no fib! —*Kate B.*

I am 97 years old and have edema in my left foot and leg. My daughter saw the Exerciser 2000 in an ad and encouraged me to try it. It is helping a lot and I feel alive again. Thank you!—*Grace R.*

I have loved your product for many years now and couldn't live without one. It truly is the best product on the market…and I would never pay a person to do what this does better. You have the control of it all…and I love that. It definitely pays for itself many times over!! —*Kathy C.*

I am an 88 year old woman with multiple health problems. After seeing the ad for the Exerciser 2000 Elite® I ordered it and use it daily. I can tell it has improved circulation in my legs and by doing that it has helped my balance and walking problems. To those of you that think that you can't do regular exercise anymore, try this piece of equipment and you will be amazed how much better you will feel. —*Mildred F.*

As a Chiropractor, I would say the Exerciser 2000 enables people to benefit themselves at home. It is a valuable asset in moving lymph fluid, oxygenating the blood, increasing immune system function, maintaining mobility in the spine, and freeing up a spine that had become stiff and arthritic. —*Garry G., D.C.*



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ily members who had seen Oscar at work. I wanted to understand exactly how events had unfolded and what people had felt about this cat.

One of the people I went to, Donna Richards, was a single working mom whose mother had become a patient at Steere House. She was a former office manager at my outpatient clinic, so I felt comfortable talking with her in detail.

She told me, "First off, my mother hated cats. And it wasn't just cats. She really didn't like animals, period. Didn't see the point of them. Yet, as her dementia got worse and worse, she seemed to take more comfort from the animals on the third-floor unit. I don't know what it was about them or about what was happening to my mother, but something had really changed. She seemed more receptive on some deeper level. Does that sound strange?"

"Not at all," I said. "In fact, lately I've been wondering about the true nature of our connection with animals, especially when we're very young and very old. My son, Justin, has always been drawn to animals, even before he could talk. And I've seen that same intense curiosity with some of my patients. It's as if the relationship transcends language. I'm learning only now just how smart animals are."

"Well, Oscar was smart," Donna said. "He generally kept a safe distance from my mother, but when she'd stop to talk to him, he'd stop too. He never stayed long, and he never cuddled up to her—he was more like a visiting dignitary than a house cat. But he always made time to hear her out."

I asked her to tell me about how things went at the end.

"When my mother got sick for the last time," she said, "Oscar seemed to warm toward me. In the last 72 hours of her life, when I was sleeping in a recliner next to my mother, Oscar would wander into the room and snuggle next to me. After a while, he would jump onto my mother's bed and sit beside her. He did that for pretty much the entire time she was dying. He always seemed to know when he was needed, although he never asked for anything in return. He would let me stroke him under his chin and rub his little ears. It was as if he knew it was helping me. Which it did. There is something very calming about petting a cat."

She paused and, seeing how engaged I was, continued.

"I went home for a little bit at one point," Donna said. "And sure enough, my mother died shortly after I left her room. Honestly, she probably waited for me to leave before she let go. That was just her style." She smiled. "But my mother wasn't alone. She had Oscar. When she took her last breath, that cat was next to her. He was right there."

I was no animal behaviorist, but I was gaining compelling insight.

I had an image in my head of Os-

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car sitting with Donna and her dying mother in a darkened room during the woman's final days. I could see it. I thought, Maybe that's all Oscar really was: a companion, a sentient being who accompanied one person on his or her journey to the next world. Or accompanied a family member through the grief of losing someone he or she loved, a kind of underworld of its own. Wasn't that enough?

I wondered: Did it matter that this cat had some extrasensory power of perception that allowed him to pick up on impending mortality before highly trained medical minds could? Or was he just a master of empathy? Maybe caring was this cat's superpower.

Certainly Oscar had a lot of family members to bestow that power on—all the residents of the third floor, in fact. This was his home, after all. And when someone in his family was in trouble, he went to that person and stayed with him or her for as long as he was needed.

Yes, I had started out not believing in this cat. But I now concluded, with awe, that Oscar indeed had a purpose. An important one.

I went to Mary and shared what I'd learned about this enigmatic and stalwart cat.

"The thing you have to remember about domesticated animals," she responded, "is that people began keeping them because they, in fact, had a purpose. They worked. Dogs herded sheep or other animals. Cats hunted mice on farms. One way or another, the animals earned their keep."

"So you're saying it's Oscar's job to take care of people?" I said.

Mary shrugged. "Why not? Maybe he's just more highly evolved than other cats. Maybe it's Oscar's way of paying the rent." She checked her watch and smiled at me. "We're all just guests here, you know."

TIE ONE ON

As we gathered in the living room, my father opened up his birthday present from my mother—two exquisite silk ties. With nary a thank-you, he quietly slipped away to their bedroom. There he changed into a crisp white shirt and his best suit before parading in front of us wearing one of the ties.

Mom looked at his ensemble, then asked, "Don't you like the other one?" *Winston Wade*

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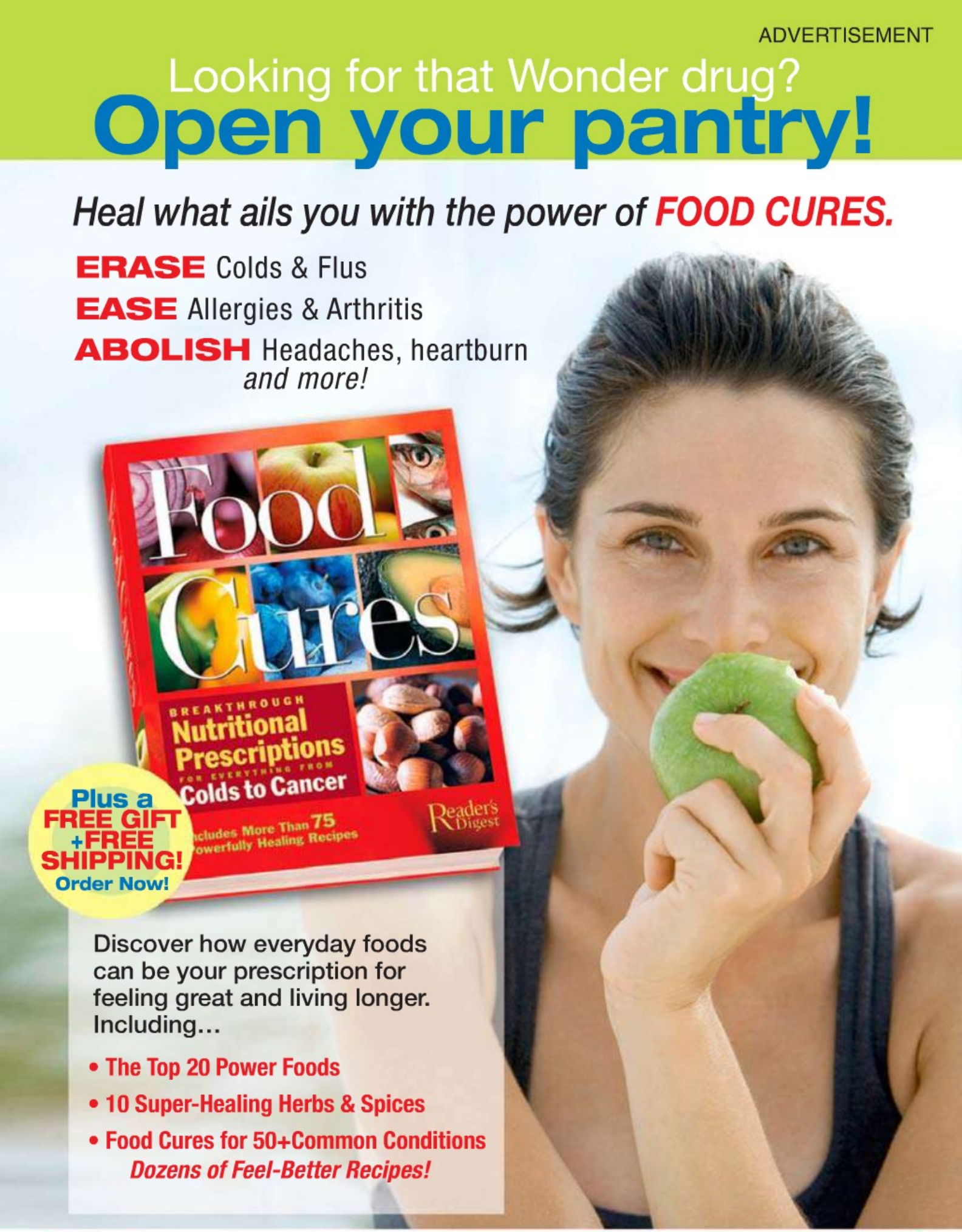

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Eater's Digest

SUPER RECIPES FOR THE SUPER BOWL

Sirloin Rolls

SEE NEXT PAGE FOR RECIPE

It's that time of year, when friends gather around the hearth on snowy nights—and around the TV on Super Bowl Sunday. Make any get-together extra satisfying with hearty favorites from ***Morton's The Cookbook*** by the famed steak house's cofounder, Klaus Fritsch. Recipes like Asian-inspired steak rolls, savory baked onions, and tangy blue cheese dip can be prepared ahead of time and are all winners—no matter how your team performs on the field.

BEN FINK

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Sirloin Rolls *Serves 6*

Morton's famous steak gets an exotic twist with an Asian-style sauce and lemongrass stalks (available at Asian markets and some supermarkets).

- ¼ cup fish sauce
- 2 tbs. sesame oil
- 2 tbs. dry sherry
- 1 tbs. minced shallot
- 1 tbs. minced scallions, white and green parts
- 1 tbs. minced peeled lemongrass stalks
- 1 tbs. soy sauce
- 1½ lbs. partially frozen sirloin strip steak, fat trimmed, 2½ to 3 in. thick (see note)
- 6 lemongrass stalks, peeled and trimmed to ¼-in. diameter, then cut into twelve 6-in. pieces
- 1 tbs. sugar
- ⅛ tsp. cornstarch
- 2 tbs. sunflower or canola oil

1. In small bowl, mix fish sauce, sesame oil, sherry, shallot, scallions, lemongrass, and soy sauce until well blended. You will have about ¾ cup of chunky sauce. Divide sauce and place each half in separate bowl. Set 1 bowl aside to use later.

2. Holding knife at sharp angle, slice sirloin into 12 very thin slices, each 2½ to 3 inches wide. Lay meat on work surface and brush 1 side of each slice with sauce. Lay 1 lemongrass stalk lengthwise along each strip of meat and roll up. Arrange rolls, seam side down, in shallow glass dish. Brush tops and sides with remaining sauce from first bowl. Cover and refrigerate rolls about 1 hour to marinate.

3. Whisk sugar and cornstarch into reserved sauce.

4. In sauté pan large enough to hold rolls, heat sunflower oil over medium-high heat. When hot, cook rolls, seam side down, until browned, about 1 minute. Use tongs to turn rolls gently, and continue to cook for another minute or so to brown on all sides. Meat is wrapped loosely around lemongrass, so use care.

5. Drizzle reserved sauce over rolls and cook 3 to 4 minutes more or until sauce is heated through. Serve immediately.

NOTE: The steak should be 2½ to 3 inches thick so that when it's sliced, the pieces will be wide enough to wrap around the lemongrass stalk. Partially freezing the meat will make it easier to slice. Put the meat in the freezer about an hour before you plan to slice it.

Game Plan

Laying in supplies for a crowd can be tricky. We asked top catering experts for a guide.

> **Serving mostly finger foods?** Figure on at least ten appetizer pieces per person.

> **If your Super Bowl party features chicken wings,** allow a half pound per person.

> **Each guest** will scoop up about an ounce of dip.

> **For cheese,** plan on two ounces per person.

SOURCES: NOEL CHRISTMAS, EDITOR AT ALLRECIPES.COM; LINDA ABBEY, VICE PRESIDENT OF GREAT PERFORMANCES CATERING IN NEW YORK CITY.

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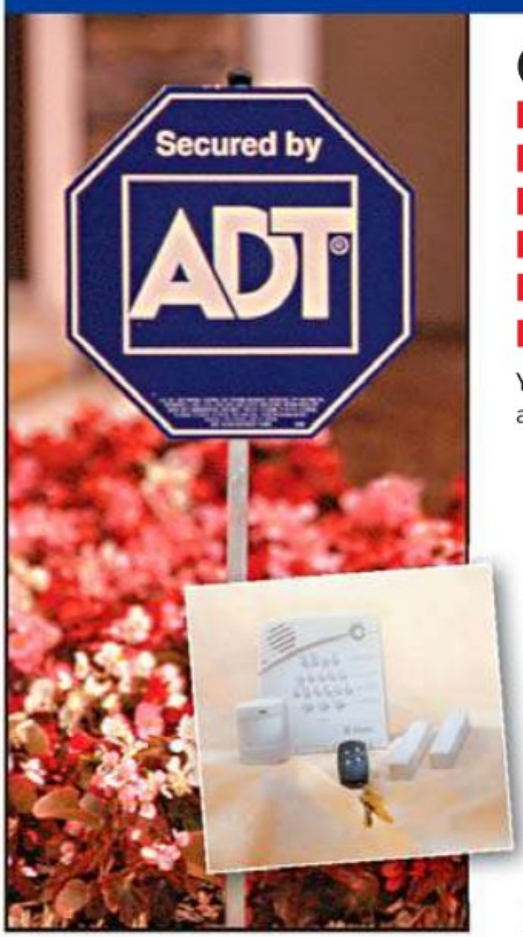

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Baked Onions with Gruyère *Serves 10*

Onions turn tender and juicy when baked; a little Gruyère makes them rich and irresistible.

- 5 medium sweet white onions, such as Vidalia
- 2 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 cup low-sodium beef broth
- 2 tsp. low-sodium soy sauce
- 1 cup (about 4 oz.) finely shredded Gruyère cheese
- 2 tsp. finely chopped fresh sage

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Coat large, shallow baking dish with cooking spray. Baking dish should be large enough to hold 10 onion halves.

2. Trim about ¼ inch off top and bottom of onions so that halves sit flat on a plate. Cut onions in half crosswise and then peel them. Arrange onion halves, cut sides up, in baking dish.

3. Brush exposed onion tops with olive oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Bake about 35 minutes.

4. In glass measuring cup, mix beef broth and soy sauce. Remove dish from oven and pour sauce over onions. Return to oven and continue baking about 1 hour, basting occasionally. If liquid evaporates, add a little water.

5. Remove dish from oven and sprinkle cheese and sage evenly over onions. Bake 5 to 7 minutes more or until cheese melts.

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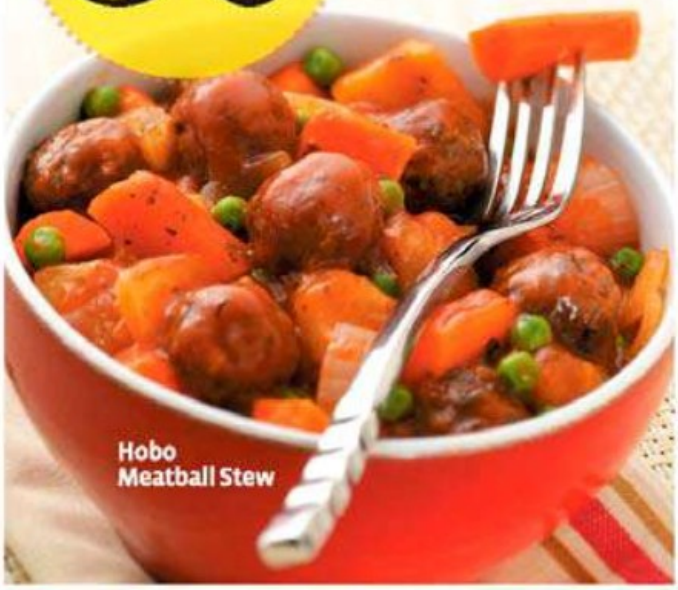

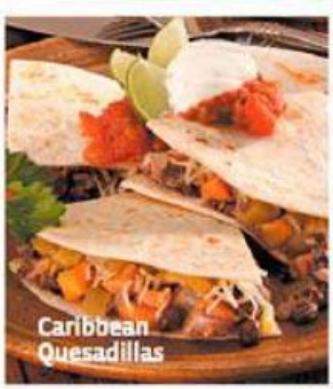

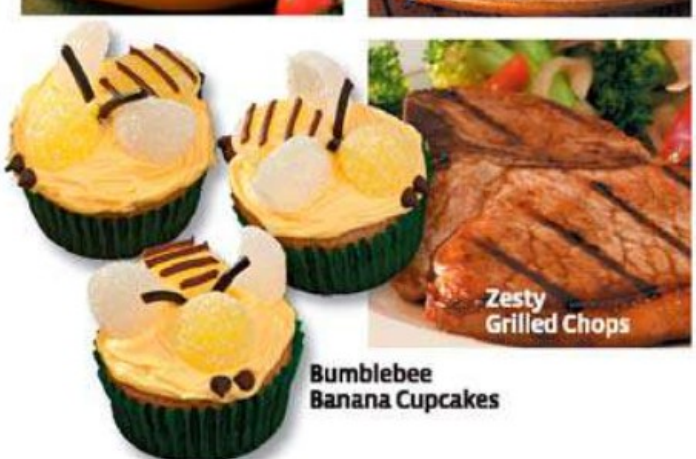

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Warm Blue Cheese Dip

Serves 8 to 10

Bacon and garlic give this crowd-pleaser an extra kick.

- 8 slices hickory-smoked bacon, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 8 oz. cream cheese, softened
- ¼ cup heavy cream
- 4 oz. crumbled blue cheese
- 2 tbs. chopped fresh chives
- 2 tbs. chopped almonds
- Crackers, trimmed fresh vegetables, or sliced baguette, for serving

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. In nonstick skillet, cook bacon over medium-high heat about 8 minutes or until nearly crisp. Drain bacon and wipe skillet dry.
3. Return bacon to pan, add garlic, and cook over medium heat until bacon is crisp, about 3 minutes. Make sure garlic doesn't burn. Drain on paper towels.
4. Using paddle attachment of electric mixer, beat cream cheese in bowl until smooth. Add cream; beat well to mix. Fold in bacon, garlic, blue cheese, and chives.
5. Transfer to 2-cup baking dish; top evenly with almonds. Bake about 30 minutes or until heated through. Serve with crackers, baguette slices, or vegetables. ■

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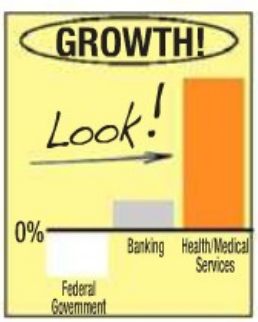

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For fast-acting relief, try slowing down.

Lily Tomlin, from her act

Stress is an ignorant state. It believes that everything is an emergency.

Natalie Goldberg, Wild Mind

Tension is who you think you should be. Relaxation is who you are.

Chinese proverb

The way I see it, if you want the rainbow, you gotta put up with the rain.

Dolly Parton

VERA ANDERSON/WIREIMAGE

If you see ten troubles coming down the road, you can be sure that nine will run into the ditch before they reach you. *Calvin Coolidge*

As a rule, what is out of sight disturbs men's minds more seriously than what they see. *Julius Caesar, The Gallic War, Book VII*

Stress is your body's way of saying you haven't worked enough unpaid overtime.

Scott Adams, Don't Step in the Leadership: A Dilbert Book

How much pain have cost us the evils which have never happened.

Thomas Jefferson

Stress cannot exist in the presence of a pie.

David Mamet, Boston Marriage

Stress is like spice—in the right proportion, it enhances the flavor of a dish. Too little produces a bland, dull meal; too much may choke you. *Donald Tubesing, Kicking Your Stress Habits*

Got That?

Many people worry so much about managing their careers but rarely spend half that much energy managing their lives.

Reese Witherspoon

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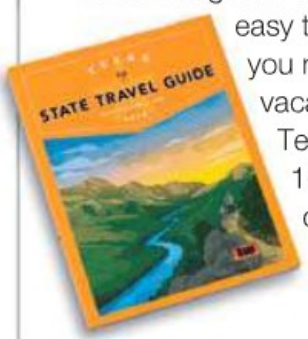

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Do You Believe In Angels?

His name was Victor. Throughout all of his 88 years he had believed in angels, and on February 14, 1994 that belief became a reality for his family.

Victor and his wife Josephine had just returned from dinner to celebrate Valentine's Day. Yes, after fifty-five years of marriage, they still celebrated Valentine's Day every year with a nice dinner.

That particular year after returning home, they were sitting quietly at the kitchen table. Josephine was watching over him worriedly because Victor was experiencing chest pain. "Just a little pressure", he insisted. "Let's see if it gets better".

Josephine, anxiously wringing her hands, was close to tears. Just then the phone on the wall over her shoulder rang. She answered it and the voice on the other end said "This is 9-1-1, do you have an emergency?"

Confused, Josephine could only say "What?" The 9-1-1 operator repeated: "This is 9-1-1, do you have an emergency?" Josephine said to Victor, "It's 9-1-1, they want to know if we have an emergency."

Victor immediately responded. "That's my angel! Tell them I need an ambulance!" Josephine then told 9-1-1 that her husband was having chest pain and an ambulance was sent immediately.

What followed was a series of "coincidences" that can only be explained as miraculous. The end result was an 88-year old man having triple bypass heart surgery against great odds. He went on to live six more years.

He went on an Alaskan cruise with his wife. He went to Italy with his family. He saw a World Series game. He enjoyed countless family weddings, dinners and get-togethers. Quality of life? *In spades!* When he finally passed away in 2001, it wasn't his heart that took him.

Victor was my father. I didn't used to be a believer. In fact, I went to the 9-1-1 offices shortly after everything happened to listen to the tape of the 9-1-1 call that night.

What I heard was there *was* no incoming phone call to the 9-1-1 offices… nothing. Just the call from 9-1-1 that my mother answered.

But because of that night and the events that happened since, I know that angels exist. My father always wore an angel pin on his lapel as a reminder, and I have kept angels throughout my home every day since. I will never forget…

Do you believe in angels? In the new book, *Angelwhispers* by Marcy D. Nicholas you'll learn about *angel nudges* – those little premonitions or intuitions that sometimes pop into your head for unknown reasons. You'll learn how to listen for them to help you deal with the changes in your life and even the hardships.

Angelwhispers will help you tap into the power that you hold within you to help you improve your life, improve relationships, resolve anger, even make more money, and live a happier, joyful more fulfilling life.

If you believe in angels, then you know that each of us has a guardian angel to help us and to keep us safe. But did you know that you can learn how to communicate with your guardian angel?

A recent Gallup poll showed that 80% of North Americans believe that God performs miracles yet few believe it can happen to them.

Sometimes angels can arrange coincidences so that you are in the right place at the right time to meet the right person to help you in a given situation. Angels can even arrange a series of circumstances. Things like my father's 9-1-1 call that set into action that series of events…

Angelwhispers. That seemingly insignificant coincidence that isn't a coincidence at all, but rather the angels at work in your life.

In this groundbreaking book, not only will you learn how to speak to your angel, you will learn how to experience moments of great peace. You will learn the importance of gratitude and how to express it as well as:

- How to Communicate with your Angel
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Word Power

EMILY COX & HENRY RATHVON

Eat Your Words Gastronomy—the art of eating—is a rich source of vocabulary in all languages (Italians have far more words for *pasta* than Eskimos have for *snow*). See how many culinary words you know, even if you can't boil water. For answers, turn the page.

1. eupeptic (yoo-'pep-tick) *adj.*—A: perfectly ripe. B: having a peppery flavor. C: promoting good digestion.

2. dim sum ('dim 'soom *or* 'sum) *n.*—A: dark meat of a duck. B: made with a blended soy sauce. C: small portions of a variety of foods.

3. sommelier (sum-ull-'yay) *n.*—A: wine steward. B: head chef. C: light salad dressing.

4. dredge ('drej) *v.*—A: lightly coat, as with flour. B: grind into meal. C: bind the wings and legs of a fowl.

5. Florentine ('floor-un-teen *or* -tine) *adj.*—A: prepared with a cream sauce. B: prepared with spinach. C: prepared with mozzarella.

6. julienne (joo-lee-'en *or* zhoo-) *v.*—A: season with herbs. B: steam. C: cut into thin strips.

7. roux ('roo) *n.*—A: spicy stew containing okra. B: bead-shaped grain. C: thickener for sauces.

8. coddle ('cod-dull) *v.*—A: unmold candy. B: beat with a whisk. C: cook gently in hot water.

9. bain-marie (ban-muh-'ree) *n.*—A: cheese slicer. B: double boiler's lower pot. C: small pastry tip for icing petits fours.

10. nori ('noh-ree *or* 'nor-ee) *n.*—A: dipping bowls. B: seaweed wrapper for sushi. C: drink made from fermented rice.

11. macerate ('mass-uh-rate) *v.*—A: sizzle. B: soften by steeping. C: break into crumbs.

12. tandoori (tahn-'dure-ee) *adj.*—A: flavored with curries. B: sweetened with tamarind. C: roasted in a charcoal oven.

13. trencherman ('tren-chur-mun) *n.*—A: hearty eater. B: salad chef. C: waiter's assistant.

14. clabber ('clab-ur) *n.*—A: gristle. B: curdled milk. C: corn whiskey.

15. sapid ('sap-ud) *adj.*—A: flavorful. B: syrupy. C: stale.

From Soup to Nuts

Start with the word **SOUP** and change it into the word **NUTS** in a series of steps, replacing one letter at a time. (Example: To turn *cat* into *dog*: CAT–COT–COG–DOG.) Our seven-step sequence uses common words.

1. SOUP
2. _ _ _ _
3. _ _ _ _
4. _ _ _ _
5. _ _ _ _
6. _ _ _ _
7. NUTS

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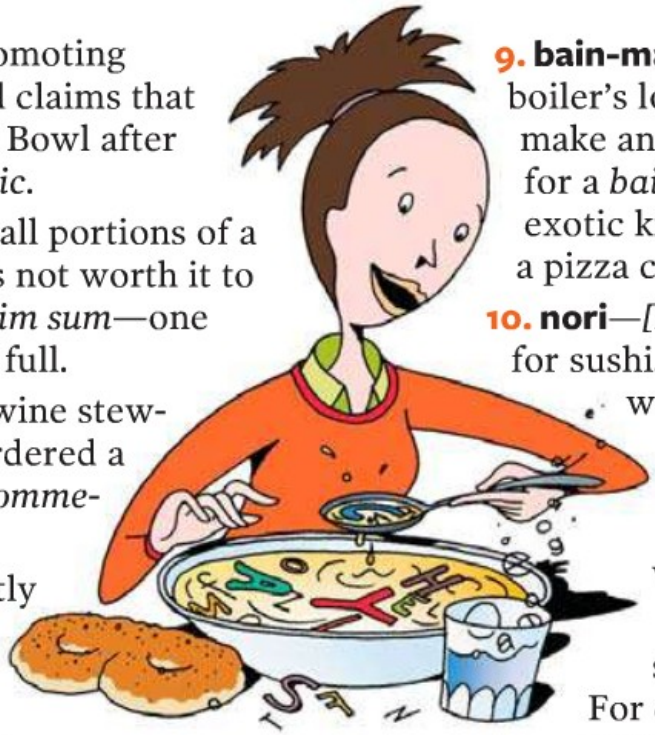
Answers



1. eupeptic—*[C]* promoting good digestion. Dad claims that watching the Super Bowl after a big meal is *eupeptic*.

2. dim sum—*[C]* small portions of a variety of foods. It's not worth it to take Paige out for *dim sum*—one dumpling and she's full.

3. sommelier—*[A]* wine steward. When Harry ordered a wine spritzer, the *sommelier* turned pale.

4. dredge—*[A]* lightly coat, as with flour. Rodney *dredged* everything in the kitchen but the chicken.

5. Florentine—*[B]* prepared with spinach. We don't use the word "spinach" in front of our five-year-old; instead we call it a *Florentine* dish.

6. julienne—*[C]* cut into thin strips. The puppy methodically *julienned* every pillow in the house.

7. roux—*[C]* thickener for sauces. If the gravy won't pour, you've used too much *roux*.

8. coddle—*[C]* cook gently in hot water. His joke's punch line was "Cannibals don't *coddle* their children."

9. bain-marie—*[B]* double boiler's lower pot. I won't make any recipe that calls for a *bain-marie*—my most exotic kitchen utensil is a pizza cutter.

10. nori—*[B]* seaweed wrapper for sushi. In his full-body wet suit, Uncle Ned emerged from the water looking like a jumbo shrimp wrapped in *nori*.

11. macerate—*[B]* soften by steeping. For dessert, our hostess served Anjou pears *macerated* in 25-year-old Armagnac, but we would have preferred Twinkies.

12. tandoori—*[C]* roasted in a charcoal oven. The restaurant's unrestrained menu included both steak fajitas and *tandoori* chicken.

13. trencherman—*[A]* hearty eater. Our teenage son, with his *trencherman's* appetite, will eat us out of house and home.

14. clabber—*[B]* curdled milk. Searching the fridge shelves for a little milk for my coffee, I found only a carton full of *clabber*.

15. sapid—*[A]* flavorful. This soup is about as *sapid* as dishwater.

VOCABULARY RATINGS 7–9 foodie 10–12 epicure 13–15 gastronome

Deep Roots

In the days before the Stop & Shop spice aisle, food was pretty lackluster, and **SALT** was so prized that people bartered with it. Roman soldiers were even paid their wages in salt—hence, the word *salary* and the phrase *worth one's salt*. Salt, of course, makes it easier to swallow food, so that's why suspicious-sounding stories must be taken with a grain of it.

> From Soup to Nuts

1. SOUP **2.** COUP **3.** COOP **4.** COOS **5.** COTS **6.** CUTS **7.** NUTS

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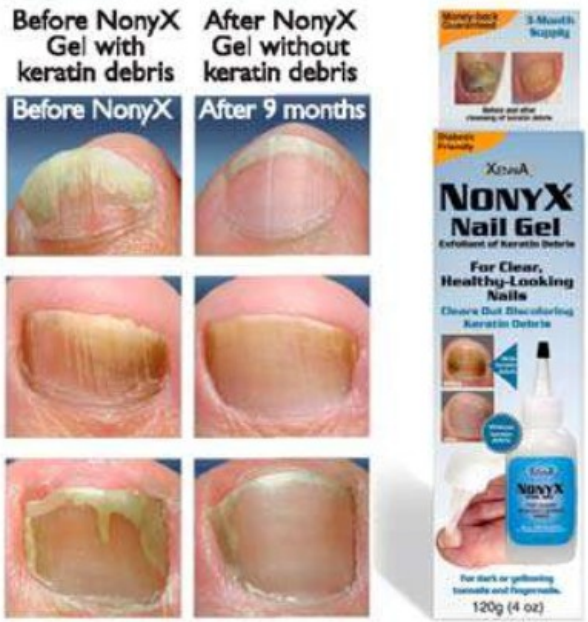

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Life

My nine-year-old daughter walked in while I was getting ready for work.

"What are you doing?" she asked.

"Putting on my wrinkle cream," I answered.

"Oh," she said, walking away. "I thought they were natural."

Deb Fillman

I posed this question to my thoughtful father: "If you could have any superpower in the world, what would it be?"

He replied, "Russia."

Lynn Gai, Houston, Texas

Scene: A conversation between two of my friends.
Friend #1: Are you visiting us tomorrow? Do you need directions?
Friend #2: I'm all set. I have the address, a GPS, and a GPS override.
Friend #1: What's a GPS override?
Friend #2: My wife.

Balasubramanian Venkataraman, Orange, Connecticut

Overheard at the dinosaur exhibit in Disney's Animal Kingdom park: a confused woman complaining to her friend, "How could they possibly know the names of all those dinosaurs if they died 75 million years ago? And another thing, how do we even know they were called dinosaurs?"

Megan Lloyd, Orlando, Florida

During a visit to our friend's home in Canada, we were feted with a wonderful breakfast. But my six-year-old daughter was not impressed.

"Your pancakes

Recently I sat in a restaurant watching two older men go at it. It quickly grew heated as one of them declared, "I'm so mad, I'm taking you off my pallbearer list!"

Tom Calvert, Richardson, Texas

ILLUSTRATED BY DAN REYNOLDS

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are smaller than my mom's," she told him.

He replied, "That's because of the exchange rate."

Cheryl Kirkbride, Orrville, Ohio

I turned to my father one night and said, "It's amazing—50 years and you never once had an affair. How do you account for that?"

He replied, "I can't drive."

Caitlin Flanagan, in *Time* magazine

My friend is a Botox junkie—she can't stop getting the injections. But surprisingly, when I reminded her to get her flu shot, she shuddered. "I hate needles," she said.

I had a solution: "Just pretend it will make your arm look younger."

Linda Lange, Las Vegas, Nevada

Stop the Presses!

Interested in what's happening in the news? No need to read the whole story. Here are the headlines:

- "Cops Use Stun Gun Twice on Unarmed Amputee" From Associated Press
- "Man Found Dead in Lake Was a Lonely Drifter" From *Tampa Bay Times*
- "NY Plans Nation's Biggest Butt Tax" From the *Corning* (New York) *Leader*; submitted by *Richard Vockroth*
- "Man Plans on Cutting Cheese Saturday in Stoughton" From madison.com
- "Newspaper Questions Man Executed in 1983 Slaying"

From the *Southern Illinoisan*; submitted by *Jenifer McClain*

Today, while playing 20 Questions with my friend, I asked, "Monsters or aliens?" She gave it some thought, then responded, "Well, I've never actually met a monster, so I'm going to have to go with aliens."

From mylifeisaverage.com

IT'S MUCH EASIER THESE DAYS

Seen in Bellingham, Washington; submitted by *David and Julianne Snell*

Your favorite new joke, funny anecdote, or crazy news story might be worth $$$. **See page 48 for details.**

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Quality Tools at Ridiculously Low Prices

100% Satisfaction Guaranteed! • Lifetime Warranty On All Hand Tools!

FACTORY DIRECT TO YOU!

How does Harbor Freight Tools sell high quality tools at such ridiculously low prices? We buy direct from the factories who also supply the major brands and sell direct to you. It's just that simple! Come see for yourself at one of our 330 STORES NATIONWIDE and pick up this FREE 9 LED Aluminum Flashlight. No Strings Attached, No Purchase Required! PLUS, use this 20% OFF Coupon on any of our other 7,000 products. We stock Automotive products, Shop Equipment, Hand Tools, Tarps, Compressors, Air & Power Tools, Material Handling, Woodworking Tools, Welders, Tool Boxes, Outdoor Equipment, Generators, and much more.

NOBODY BEATS OUR QUALITY, SERVICE AND PRICE!

SUPER COUPON!

FREE!

3-1/2" SUPER BRIGHT NINE LED ALUMINUM FLASHLIGHT

ITEM 65020

NO PURCHASE REQUIRED!

47012471

Cannot be used with any other discount or coupon. One coupon per customer. Coupon not valid on prior purchases. Offer good while supplies last. This coupon cannot be duplicated in any manner including photocopies and computer printouts. Original coupon must be presented in order to receive the free gift. Valid only in Retail Stores through 5/16/10. Limit one per customer.

SUPER COUPON!

20% OFF

ANY SINGLE ITEM!

Bring this coupon and Save 20% on one single item purchased at Harbor Freight Tools. Cannot be used with any other discount or coupon. One coupon per purchase. One coupon per customer. Coupon not valid on prior purchases or purchase of gift cards or purchase of extended service plans. Offer good on in-stock merchandise only. Savings discount percentage off Harbor Freight Tools current prices, including sale prices. This coupon cannot be duplicated in any manner including photocopies and computer printouts. Original coupon must be presented in order to receive the discount. All Campbell Hausfeld products are excluded from this offer. This offer is not valid on food or beverage items sold in our retail stores. Valid only in Retail Stores through 5/16/10.

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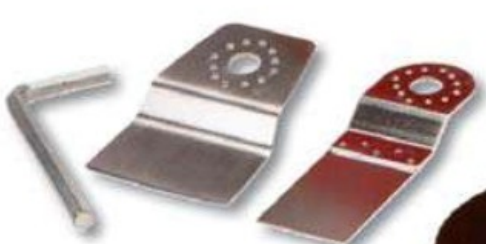
MULTIFUNCTION POWER TOOL

HIGH-SPEED OSCILLATION TECHNOLOGY



Includes accessories shown.

SUPER COUPON!

MULTIFUNCTION POWER TOOL

CHICAGO Electric Power Tools

LOT NO. 67256

SAVE 41% $34.99 REG. PRICE $59.99

62887542

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3000 LB. CAPACITY LIGHTWEIGHT ALUMINUM RACING JACK

LOT NO. 91039/67408

U.S. GENERAL

Item 91039 shown

REG. PRICE $99.99

$59.99

SAVE $40

15075518

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SUPER COUPON!

500 LB. CAPACITY ALUMINUM MOBILITY WHEELCHAIR AND SCOOTER CARRIER

LOT NO. 66303

SAVE $60

$139.99

REG. PRICE $199.99

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SUPER COUPON!

RECIPROCATING SAW WITH ROTATING HANDLE

CHICAGO Electric Power Tools

LOT NO. 65570

REG. PRICE $39.99

$19.99

SAVE 50%

HARBOR FREIGHT TOOLS - LIMIT 1

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SUPER COUPON!

10" SLIDING COMPOUND MITER SAW

LOT NO. 98199/90891/96697

CHICAGO Electric Power Tools

SAW BLADE INCLUDED!

SAVE $60

$79.99

Item 98199 shown

14562557

REG. PRICE $139.99

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SUPER COUPON!

3 GALLON 100 PSI OILLESS PANCAKE AIR COMPRESSOR

LOT NO. 95275

$39.99

REG. PRICE $74.99

SAVE 46%

CENTRAL PNEUMATIC

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SUPER COUPON!

12" RATCHET BAR CLAMP/ SPREADER

LOT NO. 46807

$1.99

SAVE 71%

58744756

REG PRICE $6.99

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SUPER COUPON!

MOVER'S DOLLY

HAUL-MASTER

LOT NO. 93888

$7.99

SAVE 46%

66639535

REG. PRICE $14.99

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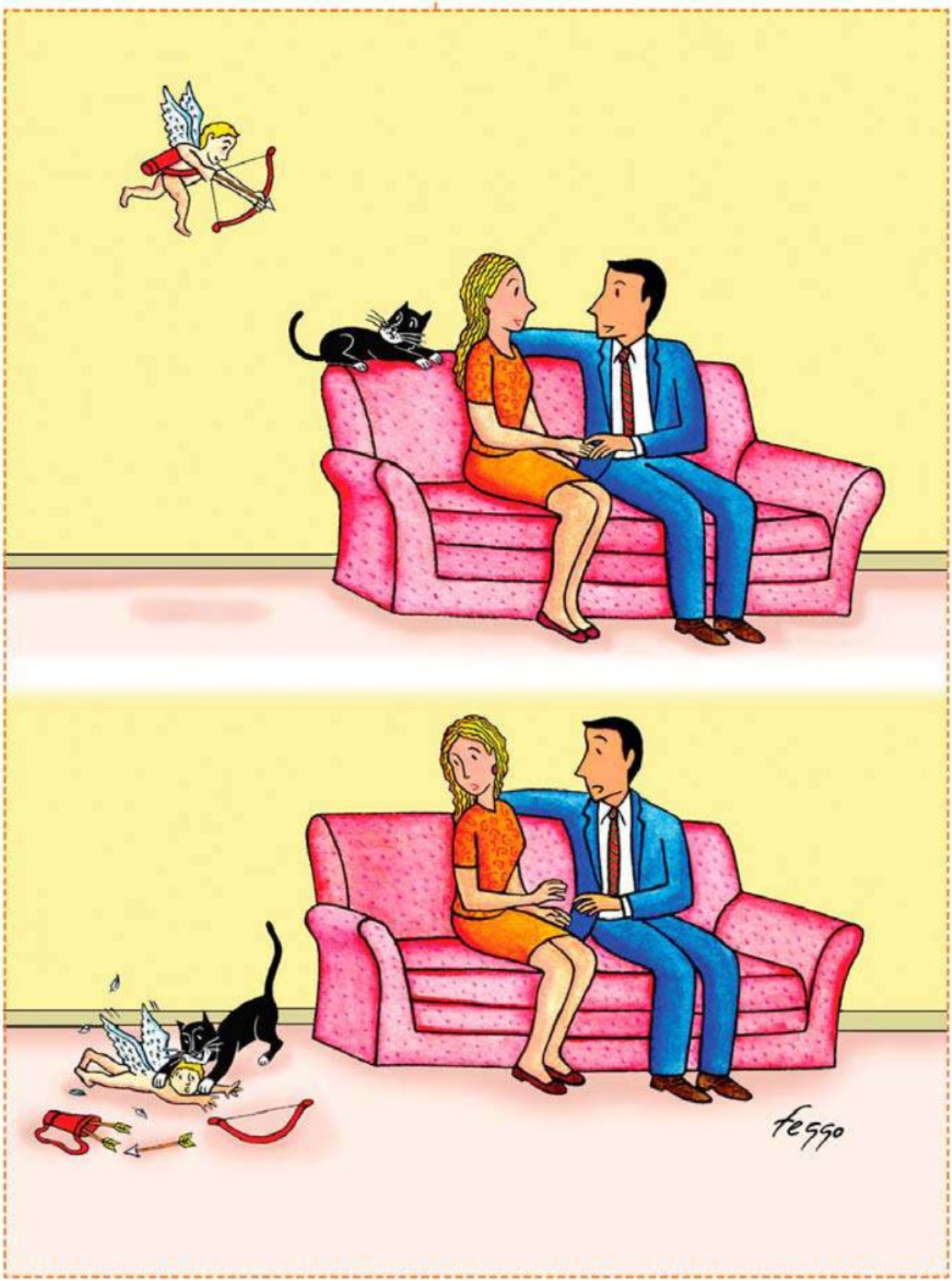

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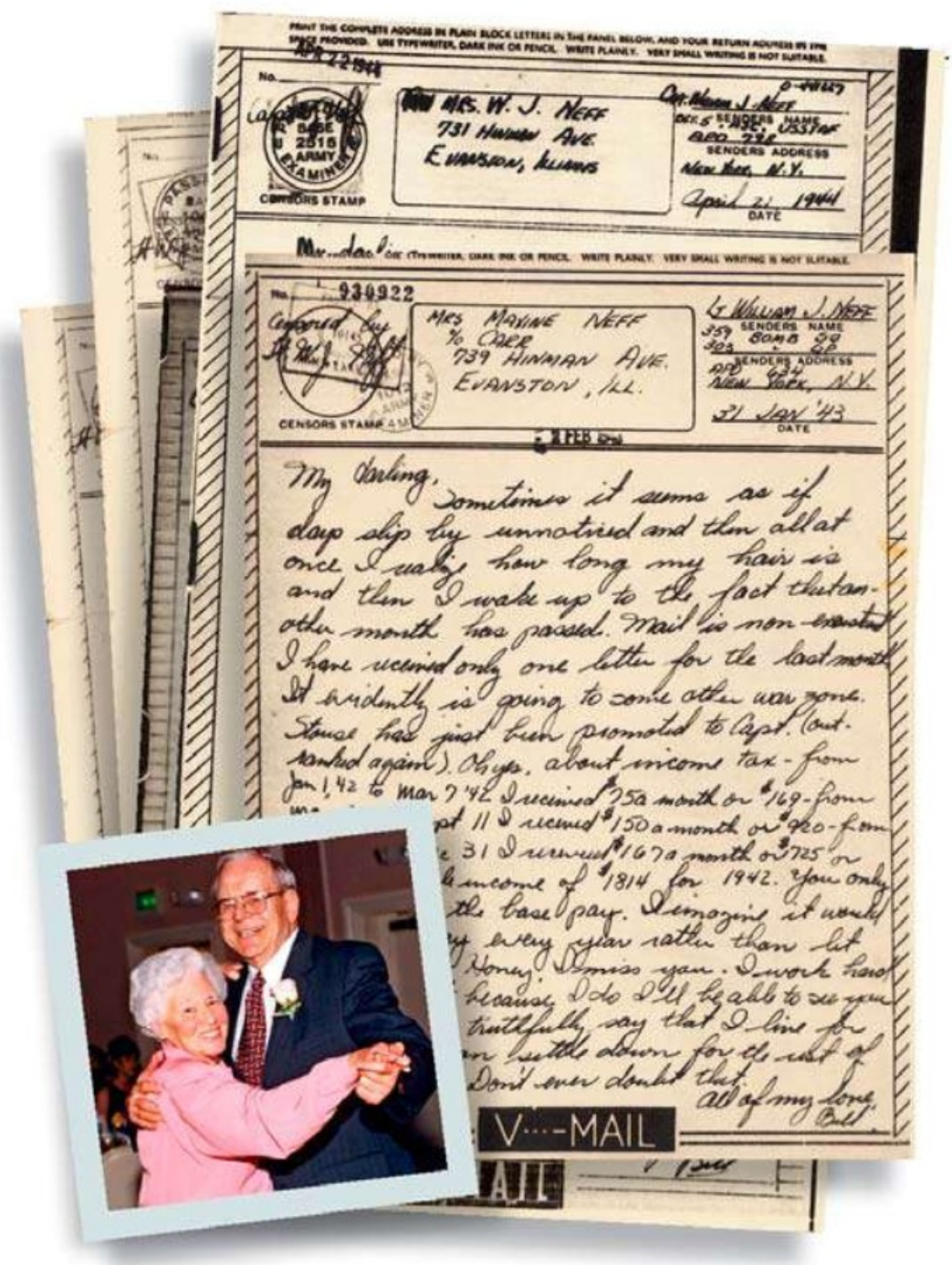
"I look at you now and feel my breath catch just as it did on that drizzly April day when your poor father walked you down the stairs and into marriage. And I think now, just as I did then, that I already have more than my share of blessings without ever counting past the first. You are my one, but that isn't the first blessing. The first is knowing I am yours."

Jay Heinrichs wrote this to his wife, Dorothy, 28 years after that April day. It appeared on the first page of a book of photos of their life together, his anniversary gift to her.


MRS. W. J. NEFF
731 Hinman Ave.
Evanston, Illinois
April 21 1944
930922
MRS MAXINE NEFF
% CARR
739 HINMAN AVE.
EVANSTON, ILL.
21 JAN '43
My darling,
Sometimes it seems as if
days slip by unnoticed and then all at
once I realize how long my hair is
and then I wake up to the fact that an-
other month has passed. Mail is non-existent
I have received only one letter for the last month
It evidently is going to some other war zone.
Stanley has just been promoted to Capt. (out-
ranked again). Oh yes, about income tax - from
Jan 1, 42 to Mar 7 '42 I received $75 a month or $169 - from
Apr 11 I received $150 a month or $420 - from
31 I received $167 a month or $725 or
income of $1814 for 1942. You only
the base pay. I imagine it would
every year rather than let
Honey, I miss you. I work hard
because I do I'll be able to see you
truthfully say that I live for
settle down for the rest of
Don't ever doubt that.
all of my love,
V---MAIL

"Honey, I miss you. I work hard, hoping that, because I do, I'll be able to see you sooner. I can truthfully say that I live for the day we can settle down for the rest of life together. Don't ever doubt that. All of my love, Bill."

One of hundreds of letters that Bill Neff, a soldier stationed in Europe, sent to Maxine King from 1942 to 1944. Bill returned home safely, and the two married and lived happily together for 60 years. He died in 2002. Maxine is now 90.

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From Jenny Weaver to Mark Bjerke, college students in Santa Rosa, California. "Scribbling the note on the envelope flap is unexpected," says Shapiro, "and unexpected is good when it comes to love letters."

im convinced that im in love...lol

After realizing she was "more than just friends" with a guy, Mylissa Highsmith, 21, declared her feelings on Twitter—within the 140-character limit.

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